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STEAM WARFARE

IN THE PARANA:

A NARRATIVE OF OPERATIONS

BY THE

COMBINED SQUADRONS OF ENGLAND AND FRANCE,
IN FORCING A PASSAGE UP THAT RIVER.

32879

BY

COMMANDER MACKINNON, R.N.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
CHARLES OLLIER,
SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND.
1848.

918.22
Mac/Ste
32879

LONDON:
GROVE AND SON, PRINTERS, TRINITY STREET, SOUTHWARK.

TO

WM. ALEXANDER MACKINNON, ESQ.,

M.P., F.R.S., F.S.A.

THESE VOLUMES

ARE INSCRIBED

BY HIS AFFECTIONATE SON,

WHOSE SUCCESS IN LIFE IS MAINLY ATTRIBUTABLE

TO FOLLOWING THE GOOD ADVICE OF A GOOD FATHER.

January, 1848. L. B. M.

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PARAGUAY,
ANTIGUO CHARCAS.

Buenos Aires

Montevideo

Asuncion

Corrientes

Santa Fé

Rio Paraguay

Rio Paraná

Rio Uruguay

Rio Salado

Rio Tercero

Rio Colorado

Rio Negro

Rio Chubut

Rio Santa Cruz

Rio Gallegos

Cabo Vírgenes

Estrecho de Magallanes

Cordillera de los Andes

Cordillera de Chiquitos

Sierra de Tandil

Sierra de la Ventana

Sierra de Cordoba

Sierra de Córdoba

Sierra de Famatina

Sierra de Aconquija

Sierra de Velasco

Sierra de Cochinoca

Sierra de Santa Barbara

Sierra de Santa Barbara

Sierra de Santa Barbara

STEAM WARFARE IN THE PARANA.

INTRODUCTION.

As the wonderful power of steam was fully demonstrated, not only in warfare, but speed of transit, during the late operations in the Rio de la Plata, the Author has been advised to lay before the public the result of his experience while making several trips up the two mighty branches of that river, the Parana as far as Corrientes, and the Uruguay as far as Paisandu. These trips, taken in H. M. steam sloop Alecto in furtherance of Her Majesty's service, afforded the author abundant opportunities of observation, in a cursory manner, of the above beautiful, fertile, and healthy regions. The ascent was

accompanied by many and great difficulties, arising from natural obstructions and the hostility of the Argentines.

To enable the reader clearly to comprehend the purpose of the warlike demonstration made by England and France, and the part taken in it by the Alecto, it will be necessary to give a sketch of the political situation of the provinces bordering the river Plata, at the time when the present diary commences. Since the declaration of independence, signed in July 1816, every state or province in this part of South America has been in an almost constant state of anarchy. The chief who could command a few hundred soldiers, frequently commenced a revolution which, in a few weeks, days, or hours, as the case might be, completely upset the former government, and placed himself temporarily in the seat of supreme power, whence he was, in his turn, expelled. In the lapse of years, the civil wars became more bloody and brutal, giving only short intervals of repose,—too short to draw forth the abundant resources of this most fruitful country.

At length, a master spirit arose,—a man evidently endowed by nature with a mind competent to curb and rule the half-savage people among whom he was thrown,—a man, whose whole course in life has demonstrated extraordinary genius in extricating himself from any dilemma in war or politics, and who, like Buonaparte, has the faculty of ensuring the fidelity and devotion of his followers. Juan Manuel de Rosas appeared on the stage of South America, and speedily made his way to supreme power; not supreme power in the sense in which it would be understood in England, but the most despotic command. His mere word was law.

It must be clear to any reflecting person that to gain such an elevation, with so barbarous a population as that by which he was surrounded, extraordinary means were necessary, though certainly not those to which a statesman would have recourse in one of the older states of the world. Rosas commenced, therefore, in early youth by a hypocritical pretence of inflexible integrity; and, as he evinced great military genius, he soon succeeded in gaining the regard of the

landed proprietors, or estancieros, from whom the army was principally recruited. For a considerable time his government, after he became president of the Argentine republic, is represented as mild and paternal. His energy and decision were proved in driving out and banishing the hordes of savage Aborigines, whose hands, like those of the Arabs of the desert, "were against every man, and every man's against them."

With various successes, sometimes in possession of the capital, and, when displaced, again investing it with an army of Gauchos, he continued until he persuaded the representative body to invest him with unlimited powers. To an ordinary intellect in these times this would have been the commencement of his downfall; but Rosas knew his countrymen well, and determined to rule them with a rod of iron. To do this with the usual machinery of government, even backed by the army, he must have felt to be a most difficult, if not impossible, task. His powerful mind, however, suggested, that if he could form a secret society, of which he was to be the head, composed of a set of

men selected by himself, for which selection his acuteness eminently qualified him, he might draw together the most energetic and active minds in the country to do his bidding, whether for good or evil. Thus arose the celebrated Massorcha club, so much talked of, which was, and is, nothing more than a powerful political engine suited to the times and the people. Rosas knew his position too well to allow any conspiracy to ripen. Active and secret members of this society reported the most minute circumstances to him. Being, by this system of *espionage*, acquainted with incipient conspiracies, the course of such a man was manifest. We are far from defending his horrible cruelties and murders, but he clearly stood in a perilous dilemma. "If," thought he, "I allow any conspiracy to explode, a revolution may take place, and I am certain to be a victim. Political plots are against the law. Ergo, the conspirators must die." And die they did.*

*In thus speaking of Rosas, it is but fair, after careful inquiry, to state, that to the best of the author's belief, all the horrible stories circulated against Donna

At one time, butcheries were carried on to a most fearful extent; but from what the author has been able to gather, the supposition was, that the sufferers were all implicated, directly or indirectly, in attempting to overturn the government. One of these attempts, headed by General Lavalia, was on the point of hurling Rosas from his dictatorship, and was only warded off by a brilliant *ruse* of the sanguinary ruler.

Among the impolitic acts reported of Rosas, was his issuing a decree in the early part of 1846, against the combined English and French squadrons, when forcing the passage of the Parana. This decree no doubt gave full authority to all the inhabitants of the Argentine Republic to murder, or torture, or otherwise dispose of, any prisoners, either English or French. Rosas probably conceived that, according to the law

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Emanuelita, the dictator's daughter, are false and malicious. By those who have the best opportunities of forming a judgment, this lady is described as a pleasing and amiable young woman. The current anecdote of a dish of salted human ears, is a monstrous invention.

of nations, the expedition, of which the following Diary treats, was piratical, and unauthorised by the governments of England and France. Still, though the peculiar circumstances under which he was placed, may be pleaded in extenuation, his decree was impolitic, exasperating, and befitting rather a savage than so astute a ruler as himself; particularly as all the officers and men in the combined squadrons were acting under legitimate authority. The result of this ferocious mandate was the cruel murder of a gallant and enterprising young English officer, causing, as may be readily imagined, extreme indignation and disgust on the part of the British and French combined forces.

When Rosas had consolidated his power at Buenos Ayres, he very naturally turned his attention, as the most powerful personage in South America, to the subjugation of the province called Banda Oriental; the capital of which, Monte Video, was torn by civil dissensions. The inhabitants were divided between the two popular leaders, Don Fructuoso Riviera and General Orribe, the latter

of whom being worsted and obliged to fly, threw himself into the arms of Rosas, who, with a view to draw Monte Video ostensibly into the Argentine confederation, but virtually under his own despotic power, and thus consolidate his rule over both shores of the Rio de la Plata, supplied Orribe with men and money, who soon overran the Banda Oriental, took possession of the whole country except Monte Video itself, which, however, he formally besieged.

Attempting to imitate Rosas in striking terror into the inhabitants of Monte Video, and thus expedite the capture of the city, Orribe miserably failed. His atrocious conduct in countenancing the murder, in cold blood, of such inhabitants as, urged by famine, ventured to steal out between the hostile lines in search of herbs to prolong a wretched subsistence, created unutterable horror among the resident merchants and European population who, previously, were indifferent as to which party prevailed. In the midst of discussions caused by such sanguinary acts, Orribe was so insane as to issue a proclamation to the effect that neither life, nor pro-

perty, should be respected on the capture of the city. Had this decree not been issued, the town would have fallen in a short time; but, so strongly were the already-excited feelings aggravated by the additional barbarity of the proclamation, that three thousand resident foreigners immediately armed, and the English and French naval commanders considered themselves justified in landing forces. Thus assisted, Monte Video still held out; and Rosas was frustrated in his desire to get possession of both shores of the Rio de la Plata, and command the highway to countries better calculated than any part of the globe to supply the necessaries of the Old World in raw material, and consume in return an immense proportion of manufactured goods.

By an old treaty, the English and French governments had guaranteed the integrity of the Banda Oriental, and Rosas was formally summoned by these governments to withdraw his troops from the territory. As he did not choose to do this immediately, his squadron, assisting the siege of Monte Video, was taken from him by a few small vessels; and a strict

blockade proclaimed by the English and French on the shores of the Rio de la Plata. The blockade commenced about the middle of 1845, and perhaps still continues—at least in name, for it never was much else. In consequence of smuggling, sugar, tea, wine, and other foreign produce were as cheap, or cheaper, at Buenos Ayres, during the whole blockade, than at Monte Video; and Rosas himself sent several cargoes of produce through the Monte Videan custom-house to England and other countries.

At this period, the governor of Entre-Rios was General Urquieza, a soldier of fortune and a nominee of Rosas. The president of the revolted province of Corrientes was General Maderiaga, who was in league with the independent province of Paraguay against the power of Rosas. These states had collected a considerable army which they had placed under the command of General Paz, a recent rival of Rosas. The ostensible reason for the collection of this army was to attempt to force Rosas to open the navigation of the Parana, which he withheld. It is difficult to assign the true cause; but,

whatever it may have been, it had the effect of closing the only outlet for the bounteous produce of this noble and fertile land. Thus the broad and beautiful river Parana, intended by nature to bear on its bosom the rich freights of the boundless and fertile regions of the countries above, namely, Corrientes, Paraguay, Bolivia, Upper Peru, &c. was literally deserted.

The determination, however, of the authorities to force a passage up this river to Corrientes, was destined to unfold the beauties and capabilities of its silvery stream; and very soon the mighty and hitherto, in these waters, unheard-of powers of steam appeared, and laughed to scorn the formidable preparations of Rosas, and the mighty obstacles formed by nature in the constantly and rapidly-rolling current, and prevailing northerly winds. By the assistance of able and energetic officers, this unknown and almost inland sea, is now as well surveyed as any foreign river in the world of the same extent.

The expedition of the combined forces, intended to cripple the power of Rosas, gave

an opportunity to as many vessels as chose to take advantage of the protection afforded by the men of war, to release the accumulated produce uselessly rotting in the storehouses of these inland states, besides throwing in a liberal supply of manufactured goods. It was not for any of the officers employed to question the legality of the expedition, as affected by the law of nations. To ascend to an unknown country, up a strange and remarkable river, with the certainty of active service, and perhaps promotion, excited the enterprise and emulation of every person in the squadron; and, perhaps, no expedition was commenced and carried out with more pleasure, or with more perfect satisfaction. The great secret of the success which crowned almost every effort, with one miserable exception, was due, firstly, to the excellent arrangements which, by the powers of steam, were so perfectly and expeditiously carried out; and, secondly, to the admirable nature of the ordnance, and the skilful application of its different branches. Where the leader is of great ability, and possesses the confidence

of those under his command, coupled with such *materiel* and *personnel* as Sir Charles Hotham had in his control, it is not by any means astonishing that everything succeeded admirably. It is rare, too, for a British officer to combine the talent for languages which Sir Charles Hotham possesses in such an eminent degree, with the perseverance and skill recently evinced in the extraordinary recovery of H. M. ship Gorgon, and in the after operations in the Parana.

Unfortunately, for some reason difficult to surmise, the marines were withdrawn to Monte Video, just at the time when these brave and efficient men would have been of the most essential assistance in the Parana, on the passage down, with a richly-freighted convoy. Upon their arrival at Monte Video, they were immediately landed in the town, where two British regiments were already stationed. This had the effect of so weakening the Parana squadron, that it was not considered advisable to attempt the meditated capture of the San Lorenzo guns, which otherwise would most assuredly have been done.

Such was the state of things towards the close of the year 1845; intelligence of which having arrived in England, three steamers, Alecto, Harpy, and Lizard, were immediately fitted out with that extraordinary dispatch which nothing but an English dock-yard could attain, or no power but an English Admiralty command.

In the mean time, the convoy were assembling at Monte Video with its protecting force, under the command of Sir Charles Hotham and Admiral Tréhouart. The island of Martin Garcia was taken and occupied, and every preparation made to strike a blow at the power of Rosas, and shew to the inland parts of South America, not only the advantage of an uninterrupted communication with the old countries, but also a slight insight into their wealth, intelligence, and power.

General Orribe still invested Monte Video with a ragamuffin crew of half-savage Gauchos, and penned up in the town, almost in a state of starvation, a force sufficiently powerful to defeat his whole army with the greatest ease. The most revolting cruelties

were exercised by both native parties, and horrible torture and deliberate murder of prisoners generally perpetrated. To excite the sympathy of the authorities, and create a stronger feeling against the enemy, it has been positively stated by a person in whose veracity the most implicit confidence may be placed, that frequently when a man belonging to the town-outpost has been killed in one of the daily skirmishes that took place, his own fellow-soldiers have cut and hacked his body about in a disgusting manner, and even disembowelled and dressed the corpse as a butcher would a sheep. Then, carrying it into the town, ostentatiously exposed it under the eye of the authorities, mendaciously asserting that the man was taken prisoner, and thus used by the enemy. This fact is merely mentioned as a specimen of the system of deception carried on by a party in Monte Video to hoodwink the authorities. Many other villanies of the like nature were perpetrated, and unhappily with too much success.

An apprehension was loudly proclaimed by a party, and generally believed, that the

cattle in the Banda Oriental were very nearly annihilated by the enemy, and that another year would clear the whole country of this great source of its wealth. To any person of common sense, a little reflection will shew, that in such a land, so admirably adapted by nature, both from soil and climate, for the breeding of cattle, the temporary invasion of a hostile army would have a directly contrary effect in every place, except the line of march, and positions of the invading force. As the enemy drove away the whole population which, perhaps, outnumbered them a hundred fold, it is too absurd to think, however destructively inclined, that any army could possibly destroy very many animals, inasmuch as the population, actuated by the powerful inducement of profit, would exert their energies to secure their cattle. It may positively be asserted that, taking the province as a whole, the quantity of cattle has increased enormously since the war commenced. All the absurd clamour raised by an interested party is therefore a mere fabrication.

Towards the close of the Author's sojourn

in these countries, he had an opportunity of forming his own opinion on the state of the two principal towns, Buenos Ayres, and Monte Video. The contrast was striking. In Monte Video, with all the civilization that the chiefs, civil and military, of the two great European powers would be supposed to bring, the town was excessively dirty, the police worse than useless, murders committed constantly in open day upon the inhabitants and upon the European seamen and soldiers. At Buenos Ayres, on the contrary, the utmost security of life and property prevailed. A strict and efficient police rendered the town as safe, or safer, than the streets of London; a vigorous government commanded due and proper respect to the laws; and British officers felt themselves not only much more secure in person, although in an enemy's city, but more courteously treated than at Monte Video. Whatever may be the faults of Rosas, he may safely assert, that whilst his city was in perfect order and security, Monte Video, under other influence, was the scene of anarchy.

After the capture and occupation of Co-

lonia and the island of Martin Garcia (the key of the rivers Parana and Uruguay), the convoy proceeded up the river, and, contrary to the expectation of Rosas, succeeded in getting safely over the dangerous flats of this part of La Plata into the Parana. For some distance, as the channel ran entirely through islands, they met with no obstruction except what occurred from the rapid downward current, and the prevailing winds. At length the whole squadron and convoy were detained by the appearance of heavy works and batteries at Obligado. An engagement of the most gallant kind ensued. It has been thought that hardly sufficient credit was awarded to the victors. Such a comparatively small force as three steamers and a few small brigs never before defeated batteries of so formidable a nature, and completely dispersed an army of, it is believed, three thousand men.

After the successful issue of this battle, the convoy proceeded up the river, still accompanied and protected by men-of-war, making the best of their way to Corrientes. But this was a task of difficulty and danger,

as the broken army of Rosas rallied and exerted every nerve, under his brother-in-law, Mancillia, to annoy the vessels whenever the channel of the river approached the Argentine shore near enough for their artillery to take effect. Two places were peculiarly adapted for this purpose; viz., Tonnelero and the Barrancas, or cliffs, of San Lorenzo. The convoy, nevertheless, succeeded in getting past without loss; and then the channel, leaving the Argentine shore, made its way along the banks of Entre Rios on the opposite side. For some reason, not clearly explained, or publicly understood, the governor of this province, General Urquieza, although a nominee of Rosas, did not take an active part to keep the convoy back; therefore, after passing the Barrancas of San Lorenzo, natural obstructions were the only difficulties against which the vessels had to contend.

It was at this time, the 26th of January, 1846, that the first of the three steamers arrived at Monte Video; namely, the Alecto, whose voyages in the Parana and Uruguay will be the subject of the following pages.

The reader's attention is requested to the very great capabilities of the country for capitalists, either large or small, and the extraordinary profits to be derived from a small outlay of money, as fully demonstrated in the Diary. But at the same time be it remembered, that life and property, except in the immediate vicinity of towns, is not safe for a moment; and that when the foreign settler may be in the most flourishing condition, a sudden revolution might, in one moment, render him houseless and destitute.

DIARY.

CHAPTER I.

Commissioning the Alecto—Activity of Dockyards—Confusion of Departure—Adjustment of Compasses—Eclair's Kroomen—Alecto's rapid Progress—Change of Climate—Alecto's speed under Canvas—Admirable ventilation and coolness of the vessel in the Tropics—Corroboration of a "Vigia" in old Spanish Charts—Losing the N.E. Trade—Steaming through the Variables—Information of a Battle in the Parana—Arrival in the Rio de la Plata—Monte Video—Scarcity of Provisions in that City—Alecto preparing to force the Parana—Atrocities of General Orribe—Anticipation of Adventure in the Unknown River—Barbarous Treatment of an Italian Trader—Interpreter engaged—Ascending the Rio de la Plata—Arrival at Buenos Ayres—Blockade of the Port—Difficulty of Navigation at Martin Garcia—Precautions against surprise.

Her Majesty's steam-sloop, Alecto, was commissioned on the 10th of November, 1845, by Commander Austen. Since 1839, she

had been employed as a Mediterranean packet; and, having received a thorough repair, was intended for the West India station. Very shortly after the pendant was hoisted, news was received of the intended forcing of the Parana. Her destination was immediately altered to that station, for which she was admirably qualified from her light draught of water; and instructions were forwarded to expedite her with the greatest possible dispatch. To effect this, a large gang of dockyard men were ordered to alter her fittings from those of a packet to a man-of-war. Her armament consisted of three thirty-two pounders, one of which, a pivot gun, was on the forecastle, and one on each broadside, just abaft the paddle-boxes. In addition, she had two land, and two sea-service rocket-stands and geer complete.

On Wednesday, the 3rd of December, 1845, she cast off from the hulk at Woolwich, and steamed down the river. All the ships' companies in commission at Woolwich had been some time employed in carrying spare cordage, provisions, sails, and an

extraordinary quantity of stores and spare geer on board her, which a steamer stows away so incomprehensibly to all but the initiated in these matters. So busy, too, were the dockyard men, that some were nearly jammed to death as they were reefing the paddle floats; and several of the carpenters' benches were left standing, not only on deck, but in the various cabins. The men likewise belonging to other ships, were hurried off the yards, where they were employed bending sails.

All this, combined with the litter of coals about the decks, and the men being not only strange to the officers, but also overcome with sorrow and grog on returning from their leave and friends, created such confusion that it can be compared to nothing but itself,—a steamer sent off in this desperate hurry, half-manned, and with a newly-collected crew.

On Saturday, the 6th, after a stoppage to find error of compasses at Greenhithe, the Alecto anchored at Spithead, where, fortunately, some good hands were found to fill up the vacancies, and an addition was made to

the number of rockets. After receiving the usual two months' advance of pay, the vessel was ordered to Plymouth to fill up coal; and as it was determined to make as much use of her as possible, a large party of Kroomen, lately belonging to the unfortunate Eclair, were sent on board for passage to Plymouth, to await the first vessel going to the coast of Africa.

On the evening of the 10th, therefore, the Alecto started for Plymouth, which place she reached on the following day. Immediately on her arrival, the wretched half-frozen Kroomen were discharged into H. M. ship Queen; and the Alecto then proceeded up to Hamoaze for the purpose of coaling, towing in, as a matter of convenience to the public service, the Albion's main-yard.

On the 13th, at daylight, the steam being up, the Alecto proceeded to sea, and with the assistance of full power and a strong ebb tide, speedily bade adieu to the shores of England. For several days the weather continued calm and pleasant. With feelings of great exhilaration, we passed, as if at anchor, ship after ship of the outward-

bound trade. Beautiful to behold was the never-tiring energy of our engines. The rapidly decreasing latitude and increasing longitude at noon every day, gave ample evidence of their great power. Gradually, as we approached Madeira, the days grew longer and the cold decreased.

On Thursday night the Alecto passed a large vessel, H. M. ship President, which sailed several days before her. On Friday morning we made the island of Madeira, and at two P.M. anchored in Funchal roads, being a few hours under six days.* If the finest frigate in the service had started at the precise moment the Alecto did from Plymouth, she would not, with the same winds, have been three hundred miles from the Land's-end. Coaling and watering were immediately commenced, and finished on the 21st at noon.

The steam being then up, the Alecto again proceeded on her long and solitary voyage. A few hours after leaving the roads, a strong

* The Author was very much surprised to find that the potato disease had been as destructive in Madeira as in any part of England or Ireland.

breeze sprung up from N. E. The engines were immediately stopped, the lower paddle floats unshipped, and the fires extinguished. The huge engines ceased their untiring efforts, and the good ship, with all her wings spread to the favourable breeze, went cheerily onwards in her course. It was found that she sailed better than the most sanguine had anticipated, although only with the jury-rig of a packet. During the whole time she was under sail off the wind, to the great surprise of all on board, she beat every vessel she met with.

Gradually, as she approached the Equator, the weather got warmer and warmer; but, from the admirable manner in which the vessel was ventilated, no one felt the slightest inconvenience. Indeed, the most experienced declared they had never felt the tropical heat so little. It was observed, on crossing the exact spot where one of the old "*vigias*" is marked down, that the water was a shade lighter than ordinary, with an overfalling sea; thus, in a measure, corroborating the correctness of the old Spanish voyagers.

On Sunday, the 4th of January, being in latitude 3° 40′ N., and longitude 28° 16′ W., the sails began lazily to flap against the masts. The gigantic power concealed in the ship's bosom was then brought into play, and soon the Alecto, with sails closely furled, was once again darting forward at good speed towards her destination.

On the 9th of January, the mighty efforts of steam having been crowned with success in forcing the vessel through many hundred miles of the calms and variables so frequently met with in this portion of the globe, the engines were again stopped; the paddle-floats again reduced, and once more the Alecto was careering before the favourable trade wind in the southern hemisphere.

A few days after this, off the coast of Brazil, we spoke an English vessel from Rio Grande, which, in passing, gave a mutilated and meagre account of the battle of Obligado. This set every one agog to get to the seat of operations.

On Monday the 26th, having obtained soundings in twenty-six fathoms, preparations were immediately made to get up

steam; and on the following morning the paddles were in motion. At the exact time expected, to the credit of our admirable chronometers, we made the shore of the Rio de la Plata, about Maldonado, and early in the afternoon cast anchor off the town of Monte Video.

Although every person on board was well aware that hostilities were going on with Rosas, still all were much astonished to find that, with the powerful force in Monte Video, not an inch of the country was possessed outside the lines; and as the neighbouring countries were not yet fully apprised of the wants of this besieged city, and of the means of payment from the exchequer of England, every article of food was extremely dear and scarce; and mules' flesh sold by weight in the market. This was tantalizing in the extreme, as immense herds of fat cattle were seen grazing in peace and plenty almost within gun-shot of the defensive line.

We ascertained that since the departure of the convoy from Obligado, after the batteries had been totally dismantled, (a period of six weeks), nothing authentic had been heard

of them, the only information being derived from Rosas' own newspaper, at Buenos Ayres, called "The British Packet," which described a severe hammering given by his troops at San Lorenzo. Of course, this was *his* story, which, from former experience, we judged to be false. Still some anxiety was felt for the absent convoy, and it was determined that the Alecto should forthwith go up the Parana.

Fortunately, from the favourable passage out, few coals had been expended. She was therefore enabled to supply her slight deficiency of fuel in the course of a few hours, and was quite ready to start the following morning. The dispatches, however, not being prepared, we had an opportunity of looking about us for a few days. Skirmishes constantly took place, and several men were killed and wounded, whilst Orribe amused himself with burning, and otherwise destroying, the houses, or Quintas, within his besieging lines. This barbarism had no earthly object, except the love of destruction, for which this wretched general is so famous. No reasonable person will ever give Orribe

credit for any other quality than the ferocious courage of an animal; as not only by his own brutal conduct did he excite the besieged to hold out, but thus ruined and destroyed the very persons and places of which he was desirous to become President.*

Monday, February 2nd. We received one hundred extra shot for ourselves. As this looked like business, every person in the vessel felt pleased, and expectation ran high touching the almost unknown river, up which we were going. This feeling was very much enhanced by the wonderful stories told by the bacchianos, or pilots.

Tuesday, February 3rd. Our orders at length arrived, and all hands were busy in getting in provisions, and stores of various kinds, for the ships in convoy. In the afternoon, being ordered on shore to survey some bread, the author had an opportunity of conversing with an Italian who had just arrived

* General Orribe repeated and confirmed the decree of Rosas authorising the torture, or murder, of whatever British or French officers or men were taken in the river.

in his vessel, an open boat about twenty tons, from the River Uruguay. He stated, that when about a hundred miles above Buenos Ayres, he one night incautiously made fast his boat to the bank. A short time before dawn, a party of the enemy, or Blancos, as they are called, surprised him, plundered his boat of all the portable valuables he possessed, and then, not content with the booty, laid him flat on his back, spread out his arms and legs, which they nailed down with spike-nails to the deck, leaving him face uppermost to be scorched and tortured to death by the burning rays of the sun as it rose in the morning. Luckily, two of his crew were lying sleeping in the bushes close by, and, thus concealed, were enabled to elude the enemy. The moment they retired, these two men leaped into the boat, cut the fastenings, pushed off into the stream, and escaped: two others, discovered by the Blancos, were slaughtered. Such is their refinement of ferocity, that it is a common thing on taking a prisoner, to peg him down to the earth, and either

leave him to be scorched by the sun, as before mentioned, and gloat upon his agonies, or peg a wet hide over his body firmly into the ground. As the sun dries the hide, so does it shrink until the miserable wretch is squeezed nearly flat to the earth, and his eyes forced out of the sockets. An older and more popular method, however, is to sew the victim up tightly in a newly stripped hide, and allow the gradual shrinking of this horrible shroud to hug him in agonizing tortures to death.

By great good fortune I met an old friend, Lieutenant Miller, R.N., who very kindly presented me with the chart of the Parana. Having this in my possession, I was enabled to prick off our daily tract with great accuracy. By it, may be formed an opinion of the extent of this vast river, and the extraordinary power and effect of steam.

Before four o'clock, every necessary preparation was made, and every store stowed away, both for the public service and various messes of the vessels we expected to meet. Some of the officers, thinking an inter-

preter might be useful, a young Englishman was engaged in that capacity. At half-past five o'clock, signal was made to weigh, and the steam being previously up, and the anchor a short stay, our vessel was immediately "a-way," and steamed off at a great rate, in a dead calm, up the Rio de la Plata, towards the Parana, every mind full of anxious anticipation and pleasing fore-thought of what was before us in these wild and solitary regions. The whole night was consumed in running up the river. The water was smooth as glass. At day-light, many anxious eyes scanned the horizon, but still no land was visible, and some of the inexperienced began to think it was mere delusion about a river at all.

About eleven o'clock, low land was seen on the port bow, and at the same time a vessel was descried a-head, which at twelve o'clock was spoken with, and proved to be H. M. ship Satellite. After some communication, the paddles were again put in motion, and the vessel's head pointed towards Buenos Ayres. At three o'clock the Alecto arrived alongside H. M. brig Racer, which was blockading the

port. Her boats had just come alongside with a prize taken the previous night. After delivering to her a boat, which the Alecto had towed up from Monte Video, our course was steered directly across the river towards Colonia. We arrived there just before dusk, and communicated with H. M. ship Melampus, which had been some time stationed at this place to help the force that held the town. We found the garrison closely besieged by the Blancos, who would allow no person to shew himself outside the walls without great risk.

Having delivered our dispatches, an effort was made to advance towards the mouth of the Parana, but night setting in very dark, and having only a foot water under the ship's bottom, it was deemed advisable to anchor, which was immediately done, steam blown off, and fires banked up to save fuel. In our after navigation of the river, it was found much more economical to bank the fires up than put them out, as by this means the huge cauldron was kept simmering all night, and at day-light steam was got up in a few minutes. As the Alecto was now

approaching the part of the river where opposition might be expected, the guns were all carefully loaded and every preparation made to repel a night attack.

Thursday, February 5th. Under weigh, at day-light, and feeling a passage up through an intricate channel, at slowest pace. Several times the vessel bumped on sand-banks, but succeeded in backing off. At noon, she arrived abreast of the island of Martin Garcia, recently taken from Rosas. Lying there, as guard-ship, was one of the vessels called "The Twenty-fifth of May," taken from the enemy. Having communicated with her, the Alecto proceeded, though very slowly. At length, thinking that the narrow channel was cleared, we increased our speed a little. Suddenly, she struck and remained immovably fixed; but by the time our anchor was laid out astern, the wind fortunately had come a-head. With all the square-sails a-back, a heavy strain on the cable astern, and full power of the engines reversed, she once more backed astern into deeper water.

As all hands had been very much harassed by hard work, and exhausted by the sun's dreadful heat, it was determined to anchor for the night. The anchor was therefore let go in four fathoms, and every body on board was glad to get a little repose.

As we had anticipated from the pilot's report, that another day would see us in one of the narrow bocas, or mouths of the river, where an attack would be likely from an enterprising enemy, the following precautions were taken to provide against anything of that kind which might happen. At eight P.M., when watch was called, consisting, from the shortness of the crew, of about twelve men, the officer mustered them, and inspected their arms, which were well loaded and prepared for action. The engineer of the watch reported fires banked up, and every thing ready to raise the steam at a moment's notice. This being over, "look-out" men were placed in the most commanding positions, and the rest lay down, hugging their arms At midnight, and four o clock A. M., these precautions were repeated: at

five, or a little later, according as day-light and the season advanced, all hands up anchor, and away went the Alecto the whole day, excepting frequent stoppages from getting a-ground.

CHAPTER II.

Approach the bocas of the Parana—Change of Scene—Contrast with the Ocean—Delicious Fruits—Submerged Land—Creeks fringed with Trees—River impregnated with Sarsaparilla—Pleasant taste of the Water—Economy of Fuel from softness of Water—The Alecto a-ground—Awful Solitude—Exploring Party—Flying Ants—Vocal Lizards—The Firebrand—Batteries of Obligado—Camp of Observation—Welcome Relief—General Paz.

FRIDAY, February 6th. After steaming about two hours, we approached what appeared very low, well wooded, and remarkably green land, but no opening, worthy of the mighty Parana, could be seen. All we observed was a small creek about two or three hundred yards wide,

The vessel's head was kept directly towards it; and in one instant, as if by magic, the whole scene was entirely changed from comparative desolation, to the most beautiful, fairy-like prospect it is possible to conceive. Our delight, after some stay in the river, was very much deadened, if not entirely worn away; but the first entrance had a most wonderful effect upon the imagination.

We now found ourselves threading our way through numerous little islands standing as sentinels at the mouth of the Parana. The width varied from a few hundred yards to a mile. Occasionally the vessel steered close to the trees on one side, then, as the channel varied, shot across to the other. The water was smooth as a sylvan lake, while the fragrance of the air, the exquisite verdure of the trees, and the half-submerged jungle, formed a captivating contrast to the wide Atlantic. Sometimes, by extending an arm from the paddle-box, a beautiful and unknown flower might almost be grasped; but, more seductive than all, as we glided swiftly and quietly past the fruit islands, large clusters of rosy and tempting peaches

and nectarines, in large quantities, hung almost within our reach, but oh, provoking in the extreme, out of our grasp. It will be easy to imagine the longing eyes which were rivetted upon these delicious fruits, particularly by those who had just come from a long sea voyage. Our torment resembled that of Tantalus; but, as we were then unacquainted with the manœuvres of the enemy, it was considered unadvisable to land.

These islands are very low, covered almost entirely with fruit trees, under which grows a very thick and entangled jungle, with here and there large marshes covered by long reeds or sedge, and filled with strange aquatic birds. Occasionally, as we went along, a pretty winding creek branched out into the distance; and, when it passed through one of the apparently interminable, and Savanna-like marshes, was beautifully fringed with trees, which marked its course for miles. It is currently asserted, and very generally believed, that the waters are so impregnated by the roots and branches of the sarsaparilla trees, as to act medically on strangers,

until accustomed to their effects. This was certainly experienced on our entering the Parana, and it had a beneficial effect upon the health of all.*

We were all surprised at the remarkable softness of the water, which proved very favorable in the generation of steam; so much so, that a great saving of fuel accrued, especially when compared to the use of sea-water for that purpose.

We continued our progress all day, cautiously steering through the fruit islands. The river increased in width, or, rather the islands receded from one another, leaving the channel somewhat wider. Trees now became fewer, except a beautiful fringe on each bank of the numerous creeks which meandered away, traced only by their borders of foliage, till they were lost to the eye in the far distance; while, from the mast head, could be seen a boundless plain of vivid green, produced by the long-waving grass, half-submerged by the high river. Upon

* A medical view of the river is about to be published by Doctor Charlton, a gentleman admirably qualified for the subject.

every little plot of ground rising from this immense alluvial plain, a clump of trees shot up.

At six o'clock, just as we were congratulating ourselves upon our lucky escape from numerous banks in this part of the river, and thinking of picking up a snug berth for the night, inasmuch as the leadsman on each paddle-box called out seven fathoms, we were suddenly roused to attention by the altered cry of the man on the dolphin-striker, who exclaimed, "Fourteen feet!"

"Stop her!" "Back turn!" were the orders instantly given; but alas! the Alecto's power was not equal to her bulk. Before the reversed engines could arrest her way, she was hard and fast on a mud bank, with eleven feet six inches under her bow, twelve feet under her stern, and seven fathoms not five yards from the starboard gangway. With all our endeavours we could not back her off with engines before dark; so, banking up the fires, we commenced laying out anchors in the most approved fashion. As soon as this was done, up steam again, backed paddles with might and main, and, at the same

time, got a heavy strain on the cables, but without stirring the vessel an inch. This effort being unsuccessful, we started forty tons of water, which the engine, working backwards, pumped out as fast as started; shifted aft guns, shot, spare bread, and all heavy stores. By the time this was effected, three A.M., the people were so exhausted that a short rest was indispensable.

At day-light we re-commenced with all our means; but, to our great mortification, the anchor came home without moving the vessel an inch. As it was quite impossible for us to lay out a bower anchor with any, or all our boats put together, we were obliged to back the stream with the kedge; this was a heavy job with the rapid current and extremely small boats, but was, nevertheless, successfully accomplished by seven A.M. At half-past seven, a heavy strain was again got on the purchases, and the engines were in full play. Immediately after, with three loud cheers, the Alecto was drawn into deep water, and safely anchored for a time in the middle of the stream, to give the men rest and put the vessel to rights. After due repose and

refreshment we again breasted the stream, and proceeded upwards.

From the mast-heads, the scene was continually varying on account of our rapid change of position. The Savannas* sometimes appeared like beautiful, snug little meadows, well sheltered with trees, and then again extended into interminable plains as far as the eye could reach. The most singular feature, however, and one well calculated to strike the imagination of an inhabitant of a populous and civilized country like our own, was the awful, almost speaking, solitude. The richness and luxuriance of the vegetation inspired deep regret, that so magnificent a soil and climate should be left thus, instead of contributing to the benefit, and happiness, and civilization of the great human family.

About noon, the barometer commenced falling rapidly, immediately followed by a black appearance gathering towards the S.W. At four P.M., as the weather had become very threatening, we anchored in a snug berth on the weather side of the channel. This was hardly done before a Pamparo burst upon us.

It proved a light one, however, and was little more than a heavy squall, which blew itself out completely in two hours, accompanied by vivid lightning and heavy rain.

Towards the evening, the weather cleared up, and we prepared to land and explore the island under whose lee we had sheltered our vessel during the storm. A well-armed party, therefore, speedily landed on the nearest point. The first thing which struck the eye was a great number of the passion flower, in all stages, from the young half-formed bud to the ripe fruit. Upon these last, were greedily feeding large flocks of paroquettes, and other small birds of beautiful plumage. The long coarse grass, from three to eight feet in height, rendered it extremely difficult to walk far from the banks; but, nevertheless, some of the party succeeded in procuring several of the gaudy-plumaged birds, which, most unpoetically, from the dearth of fresh food, were afterwards made into a pie. One of the party happened to pass within about five yards of a hanging nest, suspended on the branches of a tree,

seven or eight feet from the ground. This was inhabited by a species of insect which is best described as a large flying ant. With one accord the winged tenants flew at the unfortunate intruder, and severely stung the exposed parts of his body. The stings proved extremely venomous, and caused very irritating and painful lumps, much worse than are usually inflicted by such minute insects, however poisonous may be their nature. Two small birds were shot, with long slender feathers sticking out of the tail to the length of eighteen inches, called by the sailors widow-birds. These were killed merely from curiosity, as they had a very conspicuous appearance flying through the air with such singular appendages.

The mosquitos annoyed us considerably, particularly if we sat still for a moment; but this was to be expected after the violence of the Pamparo had subsided, and when the beautifully placid night, invited forth all animated nature to rejoice in the freshness and fragrance around.

Having the middle watch, I was extremely struck, although well acquainted with tro-

pical climates, with the varied and extraordinary noises made by insects and lizards on shore; my attention was attracted by one sound in particular, which a clever bacchiano, or pilot, informed me afterwards, was caused by a species of lizard; it was heard at regular intervals, and resembled tones produced by a person running slowly and plaintively over the strings of a guitar. The look-out men repeatedly reported tigers prowling along the beach; but as no roaring was heard, and my eyes were strained in vain to catch a glimpse, I was reluctantly obliged to disbelieve the report.

Sunday, February 8th. After gliding along tranquilly about an hour, our attention was attracted by a long line of smoke, a great distance over the land, on the starboard bow. Had we been at sea, we should have pronounced it to be the smoke of a steamer. As we approached, the similarity became stronger and stronger, until there could be no mistake about it; for a huge funnel, distinctly visible, was approaching us rapidly, but evidently in another branch of the river. At length, on approximating within four miles

of the strange steamer, she signalled us to anchor, and wait her arrival; adding, that she was the Firebrand, our senior officer. To hear is to obey in the navy, and our anchor was immediately dropped. Immediately afterwards, the Firebrand appeared to be going directly away from us, but this seeming deviation was only that she might get into the main branch, where we were. In about three hours and a half she joined us, hailing us, as she passed, to follow in her wake. Every preparation having been made, away we went together; but, as her power was exactly proportioned to her size, which that of the Alecto was not, it was impossible to keep up with the Firebrand; and, although working little more than half power, she gradually drew far a-head.

The only change in the character of the country to-day was a line of cliffs, or barrancas, running obliquely from a distance towards the course of the river: these were the heights of San Pedro. At six P.M. we passed the town of this name, about three miles distant, over the Savanna-like

islands. With our glasses we could discern not only the houses, but likewise the enemy's cavalry, who appeared quite astonished to see two great, black, smoking machines going swiftly up their river, not only against the eternal current, but also without a breath of wind. The town of San Pedro seemed to be composed principally of a church, and a collection of mud hovels. But, be it remembered, we were not land travellers: our only means of judging, were afforded by a steamer's masthead, and a trusty Dolland. About eight P.M. we arrived at, and anchored off, the site of the celebrated batteries of Obligado.

As it was deemed advisable, for reasons connected with the advantage of Her Majesty's service, that we should remain here for the day, a favourable opportunity was afforded the author of minutely inspecting the position; and he cannot but conclude that it was chosen with great skill and a thorough knowledge of fortification. But what could these advantages avail against

the power and scientific application of European ordnance, which it is his belief was one cause of the victory achieved at Obligado?

The river, at this point, is about eight hundred yards across. On the southern side is a small Barranca or cliff, about thirty feet high, with a flat and hard summit. Upon this, the enemy selected the positions for his different batteries. The opposite shore was composed of an island with the usual features, namely, low flat land, liable to be inundated, and now covered by long, coarse grass. The current, from the contraction of the channel, became very rapid, say about three knots. All these natural advantages were much increased by a triple chain drawn across the river, supported by numerous gun-boats, or small craft, and backed by a well-armed and powerful schooner.

This position Rosas and his agents fondly considered was impregnable against any force that could come up the river; and we were credibly informed, that his astonish-

ment, when he found a few small vessels knock his formidable preparations all to pieces, was extreme.

It must remain a subject of deep regret, that a large, much too large, proportion of the gunners of Rosas at this battle were Englishmen. Let us hope that they were *forced* to fight; but most certainly fight they did. Their punishment, however, was extremely severe, the majority of them having been killed. Rosas must have been well aware of the fondness of Englishmen for good cheer, as a store of champagne, claret, porter and other liquors was discovered in the camp, and destroyed by the victors.

A camp of observation has been formed at a short distance. The appearance of the enemy is very picturesque, as they continually gallop about with their red ponchos and caps. Immense troops of horses and cattle are feeding in the immediate vicinity, for the use of the enemy; but, alas! far out of reach of our hungry sailors. The moment an attempt is made to cut out any of these animals, hordes of wild cavalry immediately

spring up in all directions and drive them inland. The scarcity of fresh provisions has been so great, that the scurvy has actually broken out amongst the seamen in spite of vegetables in the garden planted on the island, which was fortunately in our occupation. The author had brought out a variety of seeds, intended for the use of the Falkland islands; but as he found how extremely beneficial they would prove here, a good portion was kept for the advantage of this garden.

As luck, like misfortune, rarely comes singly, the Firebrand returned with a large stock of cattle and sheep, for which she had been on a successful forage when we met her yesterday. Plenty, therefore, now reigned. So much so, that through the kindness of the officers of the Firebrand, we were able to obtain thirty sheep, a very welcome addition to us after our long voyage and scarcity, which the beleaguered town of Monte Video was unable to supply, except at such an exorbitant rate as to put it quite beyond our reach.

Information arrived this day from above, to the effect that General Paz was advancing from Paraguay towards Corrientes with a powerful army, so that we expect in a few days more steaming to get into a friendly country.

CHAPTER III.

Abundant Game—Enemy's Cavalry bringing down Guns —Fight with Flying Artillery—General Moncillia's Encampment—Unexpected Arrival—Information from a Deserter—Rosario Point—Position of San Lorenzo—Fool-hardy Paysanos—The Death Volley—The Effects of a Shell—The Congreve Rocket—Approach of a Pamparo—Cloud of Locusts—The Pamparo—Test of the Wind's Force—Danger to Small Craft—Disturbance of Barometer.

TUESDAY, February 10th. It had been decided the previous night, that the Firebrand and ourselves should start together the following morning; but in consequence of some slight derangement of machinery, the former

was not able to go on until an hour after the Alecto. We had, therefore, about seven miles' start. Our course was principally on the left, or Barranca side, which varied from a low sandy beach to twenty or thirty feet in height, sloping towards the river. Upon these slopes were grazing countless herds of cattle and horses; and occasionally we passed an estancia, or farm-house, generally a miserable hovel. The ground was beautifully diversified by clumps of trees. Frequently we saw, close at hand, wild turkeys and other birds, and for the first time observed a carpincho, or river hog. These animals, though often within fifteen or twenty yards of us, were totally devoid of fear. It will be unnecessary to describe the slaughter made from the paddle-boxes and gangways by the officers' rifles and guns. The game thus procured was a very welcome addition to our fare.

The beauty of the scenery at this point, was rendered more engaging by the novelty and constant changes which our rapid motion continually brought before us. At half-after nine, the river took a bend to the eastward, round

which we swept, eagerly looking for fresh views. At length, we descried a body of the enemy's cavalry moving slowly to the brow of a low sandy Barranca, which we immediately perceived we should have to pass within four or five hundred yards. Narrowly examining the hostile force with our glasses, it was discovered that they were taking guns down to the sandy place, where already were thrown up several embrazures. On approaching closer, their position was seen to be admirably chosen; nothing whatever could be discerned but the muzzles of the guns, run out, ready to open upon us the moment we came within their sight. The Alecto had prepared for action, and was ready some time previously; but it was hardly anticipated that our passage would have been contested. Orders had been received not to fire until we should be fired at.

All this time, therefore, we were losing the advantage which our heavy metal and shells would have given us within *our* range, but quite out of *theirs*. Our guns, however, were kept trained on the enemy as we

approached; and just as we got along the line of sight of the first gun, a white puff of smoke from its mouth announced the commencement of the action. The shot, however, had not reached the ship before it was returned by our thirty-twos, and the firing became general. The enemy's battery consisted of four nine-pounders, from which they kept up a very sharp and well-directed fire; and as we had not at this time got all our guns on one side, from the suddenness of the action, we could only reply with two. They commenced with great effect, nearly the first shot passing through the funnel with a loud ringing noise. Immediately afterwards, the foremost quarter-davit was cut in two and knocked away, the shot splitting into several pieces, and wounding five men. At the same time, the master, Mr. Dillon, as he was conning the shell on the paddle-box, was knocked down by a shot cutting away the fore-brace close to his back, against which he was leaning. Very little more damage was done, although several shots struck the ship, wounding the

paddle-blade, and damaging the moulding of the gun-room.

It is not to be supposed that during this time the Alecto was idle; but there was so little to be seen for a mark, and the alteration of range so great every moment, that not much damage was inflicted in return. One unfortunate cavalry soldier, standing exposed out of bravado, was seen by an officer to be struck by one of our shot between the knee and hip, and of course was cut in two. As we were now rapidly passing the enemy's position, the captain of our pivot gun, a most capital shot, not seeing any other game in view, let drive at a troop of horses. The shot dropped (being twelve or fourteen hundred yards distant) right in the centre of them. The scared herd immediately galloped off, leaving three of their number writhing on the ground.

In this little affair, the rockets were used by us for the first time. They created great surprise, as there was only one person on board, the gunner, Mr. Hamm, who had seen them fired, or knew anything about them. By not taking his advice, they were so badly

thrown as to be of little avail. But perhaps this proved to be fortunate, as attention was thus directed towards the most efficient application of them, which afterwards turned out to be of signal advantage

The extraordinary noise and tremendous rush and smoke of these projectiles, attracted every ones attention, and had such an effect upon the interpreter, we had engaged at Monte Video, that he ran down to the engine-room, declaring that he thought the ship was being torn limb from limb. Out of this retreat, however, he was speedily shoved by the engineers at the point of a cutlass, and had to stand the brunt of the skirmish on deck.

Almost immediately afterwards, we passed out of shot, having been exactly twenty-five minutes under fire. It is rather extraordinary that more damage was not done to us, as the enemy fired from such a capitally sheltered position, and could re-load, from the small size of his guns, at a much greater rate than we could, perhaps three or four times to our once, besides the advantage of having such a barn-like target as this great black steamer.

About six miles further on, we passed within a mile of General Moncillia's encampment, which made all our mouths water exceedingly, in the hopeful expectation of being allowed to burn it.* But this was not to be, and we proceeded. Just as we were passing the camp, the lower batteries opened on the Firebrand as she came within range, but with what result we were of course at that time unacquainted. From this point, a patrol of cavalry kept company with us, ambling along where the land was level and straight, and, where there was any obstacle in their path, galloping inland to circuit round it, and again watch our motions. These men constantly changed their horses whenever they required it, by lassoing any they met, and unceremoniously riding off

* The Firebrand, on coming up to this encampment, was also struck by the opportunity afforded of burning it. She therefore anchored, and dropped in a few of her large shells, which immediately cleared the whole position. As it would have answered no good or useful purpose to destroy human life here, Captain Hope spared the position, after he had thus shewn the capability of destruction in his power.

with them. When at night we anchored, they bivouacked the best way they could abreast of us, and were quite ready to start again at day-light. Just before dark we anchored out of range of the Barrancas of San Rosario, about twelve miles below the town of that name.

At ten o'clock, an alarm was given by the look-out men that boats were approaching. The watch were immediately upon the alert, and, with bayonets fixed, were ready and willing to receive anything. At length, the smallest possible canoe, with one man in it, came alongside. He proved to be a Frenchman, who, afraid of being murdered, had run away from all he possessed in the world, to take refuge with us. Being examined about the enemy's motions, he informed us that a party of cavalry had been sent on to the Barrancas of San Lorenzo, several miles further up, to annoy us as much as possible; also, that a chasque, or express, had arrived early in the afternoon at Rosario, to acquaint the authorities with our having passed up. He moreover said, that the military stationed there were very

anxious to sink us, but that the inhabitants would not allow a shot to be fired from the town if they could help it, having a very wholesome dread of the place being knocked about their ears. Consequently, he did not think we should be opposed at Rosario. He likewise told us that a report was current, that the guns which we had fought at Tonnelero, were being transported with extreme exertion across the country to San Lorenzo. It was the general opinion that the natural position of these cliffs was so strong, that nothing could withstand the fire from them. We were not much put out or astonished by this; but felt great anxiety to see the position which created such universal interest. Besides, the dragging guns across sixty miles of wild country, however favourable might be the nature of the ground, was so formidable an undertaking, that any person conversant with the difficulties of land carriage, even in the most civilized countries and best roads in the world, would distrust the accomplishment. At any rate, it was as well for the Alecto to get past if possible, before these guns should arrive.

Wednesday, 11th February. At dawn, the paddles were in motion, and the vessel proceeded rapidly up the river. As we ascended, the deep water channel contracted so much, that we were compelled to hug the Barrancas on the left, or Rosario side, so very closely, that it would have been hazardous to stand a pistol-shot from the shore. By this time a kind of intimacy was established between us and the enemy's cavalry vidette, who now continued alongside of us with the utmost confidence and *nonchalance*, grinning at the burlesque signals made to them when the officers' backs were turned, and evidently entertaining the utmost confidence in our forbearance. The sailors had given names to some of the most conspicuous of these men; with whom, like the long-journey coachman in Pickwick, they had formed an intimate and affectionate acquaintance without ever speaking.

About half-past seven A.M., the steamer rounded a point on port shore so closely that it would have been easy to jump from the paddle-box into the enemy's country, and immediately opened the town of Rosario.

This view of a strange town was very interesting, particularly as it burst on our sight in so sudden a manner, and in such immediate proximity.

But all eyes were attracted from this new object by a loud screaming, and agitation of water close under the port bow, which turned out, upon examination, to be produced by the female population of the town who were enjoying their usual diurnal ablutions in "birth-day suits." Our sudden appearance made them cluster together, and increased, if possible, their shrieking, and splashing, and fun. The group consisted of all colours, from pure white graduating to jetty black. The shouts of laughter and delight arising from the Alecto were hardly stifled by going to quarters to prepare for a large mass of cavalry drawn up on the beach, close to the course she was steering.

Every disposable man was armed with a musket, and put as much under cover as the low and slight bulwarks of our vessel would allow. It was an anxious moment, passing this force so closely, as they might have masked a powerful battery. But as

we slowly drew a-head, everything remained quiet except the orders of the captains of guns, "Muzzle to the left!" as they kept the wide-throated thirty-twos trained into the centre of the enemy's mass, with a double charge of canister-shot. Here, the cavalry vidette were relieved, and another party took their place. The latter were evidently more hostilely inclined than the former party.

The islands at this point began occasionally to change their character; and, instead of being liable to inundation, like those below, became elevated; evidently, in some parts, completely above any rise of the river, however high. A few miles of this kind of islands intervened, and then the channel approached the cliffs, which terminated in that called the Barranca of San Lorenzo. Just above Rosario the channel was about fifteen hundred yards broad, and continued so until within half-a-mile of San Lorenzo; an island then jutted out, and diminished the width, in the narrowest part, to one thousand yards. As this was the last point of the Argentine dominions, and supposed by Rosas to be

the most favourable for offence, it was determined to make a great effort to annoy and destroy, if possible, the convoy under the combined squadrons. Their preparations, however, were not now made. They had only collected a horde of paysanos, or peasants, to carry out any orders Rosas might desire his general to execute.

As our orders, not to fire until fired at, were still in force, it was with great difficulty, with every weapon of offence accurately trained, that the people were prevented from pulling the trigger. These orders, however, were strictly obeyed, until some of the paysanos, more fool-hardy than the others, and fancying themselves concealed in a bush, deliberately resting their long-barrelled muskets on the ground, fired into the paddle-box. This was instantly answered by a volley from rifles, muskets, and guns, which killed one of the deluded men, and scattered the rest inland in a moment. Soon after, they collected about a thousand yards inland, and still kept way with the masts and funnel of the ship, the hull not being visible to them. They were,

however, speedily dispersed a second time by a shell propelled by a reduced charge, and pointed by an officer at the mast-head, holding a spy-glass in their direction. By great luck the shell fell right in amongst them, again dispersing them in all directions.

A deep gully intervening, now caused their temporary absence, as they had to ride some distance round to get to the edge of the cliff again. Before they could accomplish this circuit, the Alecto had come abreast of a fresh party, the guard of San Lorenzo; who, not knowing, or not caring, for the angry feeling manifested by their brother-soldiers, stood carelessly and vauntingly on the very extreme edge of a cliff, just before a rancho, or farm-house. In the rear, was a large force off duty, intermingled with herds of cattle and horses. By this time, both twenty-four and twelve pound rocket-stands were placed; and the management being intrusted to Mr. Hamm, the gunner, every person came up to watch the result. At length the match was applied; and, after a few seconds of the outrageous noise of back fire, the rocket darted out of the tube with

its usual overwhelming impetuosity; cleared the edge of the cliff by about five feet, dividing the guard right and left, overthrowing them, like a fiery arrow, and forcing its way through the rancho, or farm-house, which was instantly in a blaze. Then, with a damaged or broken stick, it pursued an erratic and still destructive course amongst the reposing troops in the rear. To use a nautical phrase, this was a "clew-up" for the cavalry. For a few miles farther we were still within range of the Argentine shore; but were only accompanied by one man, with whom we almost succeeded in making the same friendly relations which we had established with the vidette before-mentioned.

This skirmish had a great effect on the men of the Alecto. They perceived the immense advantage of their artillery so well directed; and the practice not only improved their skill, but likewise gave them great confidence in their own powers. Although the vessel had been only three months in commission, she began to be in very decent fighting order. A portion

of the credit may be attributed to the training which most of the men had previously received in the different ships wherein they had served; but the chief praise is due to the officers educated on board the Excellent.

At eleven A.M. we arrived at the extreme point of San Lorenzo, and opened the mouth of the river Carcarana, whence a number of islands extend to the city of Santa Fé. In the afternoon, as we were slowly tugging-up along the right hand, or Entre Rios side, several mounted men came down and hailed us. As we had orders to pick up all deserters, we closed them to within twenty yards; all hands at quarters in case of treachery. Upon hailing them in Spanish, we found they did not wish to come on board, so we steamed on again. Fortunately for them, they were not traitorously inclined, as enough lead and iron was levelled at them to outweigh their bodies.

The barometer has been falling all day, and the heat is extreme. In the gun-room, with every port and door open, the breeze blowing through all, and the skylight off, the thermometer stands at 97 degrees.

The dryness of the air also from the northward, parches up the hair and skin, and causes a relaxed and languid feeling very similar to the Sirocco wind in the Mediterranean. The horizon to the south-west was heavily laden with dull, lead-coloured clouds. It was clear a Pamparo was approaching: even the birds, beasts, and insects, appeared aware of it, and were all very much agitated. At four o'clock, the wind died away, and the clouds were settling down in a very dirty, nasty-looking manner. The most profound stillness prevailed, broken only by the rapid motion of the paddle-wheels, and the voices of leadsmen. The pilot gave us to understand that a mile further on was a capital place to anchor, so we continued our course.

Suddenly, he uttered an exclamation, and pointed towards the northward. We immediately perceived a cloud, apparently of smoke, rapidly approaching us, and to our very great surprise, in a few minutes, we were completely enveloped in, as it were, a mantle of locusts. To estimate their numbers, would be perfectly impossible; but cer-

tainly for one hour they were continually driving against every part of the steamer like a heavy fall of snow. This swarm, which passed over us, was only a small under-cloud, the main body flying at a considerable distance, and appearing to be infinitely more compact than our portion. The pilot shook his head and said, "As soon as that swarm is completely past, we had better look out for squalls." Taking his advice, which we always found correct in the Parana, we immediately came-to in a capitally sheltered situation between two islands.

At six o'clock, the clouds had closed all round so completely, that although the sun was a good hour above the horizon, it was extremely dark and dismal. About ten minutes after, a light air sprung up from the south-west, the clouds appeared violently agitated, with a kind of rotatory motion, and instantly the Pamparo burst upon us with tremendous fury, accompanied by the most vivid lightnings and stunning thunder. The rain poured down in a perfect deluge, and descended nearly horizontally with such

force, that it was impossible to face it. The clouds, likewise, drove along with furious speed, apparently so close to the earth, that, for a time, the evening was turned into positive darkness, rendered more appalling by the awfulness of the thunder and lightning. Altogether the storm was as severe as any ever I ever experienced in any part of the world. When the first burst of its fury had passed, I held up, with some difficulty, a new silk handkerchief with both hands extended, and it was immediately torn to atoms and scattered to the winds, leaving a small portion in each hand. This was done in view of several of the officers, or I should not like to mention it. For one hour, until the worst of the Pamparo had passed, nothing was visible beyond the vessel, and for anything that could be seen, the ship might have been one thousand miles at sea, although certainly within one hundred and fifty yards of the weather shore. These storms appear to me very similar to the African squalls or tornados, and are extremely dangerous to the small craft navigating the river. For a short time I consider they blow as hard as

a West India hurricane, many of which I have experienced. Like all such violent convulsions, they give ample notice of their approach, not only by meteorological signs, but likewise by a great disturbance of the mercury in the barometer. This agitation of electricity, however, is more prominently brought forward, and more plainly marked by Pamparos, than by any storms that ever came under my observation. Particular attention was directed towards them from my having read, with great interest, General Reid's theory of storms, and having on several occasions found my own deductions in the Atlantic agree with those of the General. In this instance I could find no proof whatever of a whirlwind; but frequently afterwards remarked that the most violent Pamparos were generally ushered by a strong wind from the opposite quarter, or north-east.

The evening conversation turned upon the events of the day, and it was most amusing to hear the various remarks according to the different disposition and feelings of the party. Some were heartily disgusted

with the river, others highly delighted; and one individual had totally forgotten every event that had occurred during the day. A short recapitulation will demonstrate that opportunities of observation and instruction were open to those who would take advantage of them.

Firstly, the suspense and uncertainty in passing the motionless cavalry at Rosario. Secondly, the skirmish with cavalry on the heights of San Lorenzo. Thirdly, the marvellous swarm of locusts; and lastly, the awful convulsion of nature in the mighty, rushing Pamparo.

CHAPTER IV.

Punta Gorda—Admirable Position for Offence—Precautions — Hide-and-Seek — A Smoking Lady — Parroquets—Men of War a-head—Anchor at the City of the Parana—News from the Army—Admirable Pilotage—Excessive Heat—Intricate Channel—Unexpected Game on Sand-bank—Mosquito Torture—Nautical Daylight—Tropical Vegetation—Health of Climate—Jack's anxiety not to Tempt the Tigers.

THURSDAY, February 12th. The deep-water channel now approached the Entre Rios side; and, at seven o'clock, we arrived at the commencement of the Barranca of Punta Gorda which rises perpendicularly about fifteen feet from the river's edge, to about fifty feet. Our inner paddle-box was certainly within ten yards of the bank;

and for some distance it was quite impossible to elevate any of the guns to the top. It is easy therefore to imagine the exposed state of the whole ship's decks. A party of horsemen, half hidden in the bushes, were now observed a short distance a-head. All hands were immediately called up, armed with muskets, and distributed behind the paddle-boxes, masts, funnel, bitts, or any place that afforded the slightest cover; and the rocket tubes were prepared and pointed so as to clear the summit of the Barranca. In the mean time, a barricade had been built of hammocks and bags to protect the helmsman; and the starboard paddle-box and dolphin-striker leadsmen were called in. The port paddle-box leadsman being lowered over the side upon a stand fitted for him, was in complete safety from the musketry.

On approaching close to the party, it was perceived that they were all armed with muskets; but their gestures and general appearance were not at all hostile; they seemed more influenced by astonishment than anger, and came out, completely exposing them-

selves to our aim with the greatest confidence. Our men were quite delighted with this appearance of bush-fighting, as they expressed it, and were extremely jocose on the subject.

"Well, Jack," said one of them, "this here's a precious game of hide-and-seek. I never thought I was a'going to play that ere game again."

Two women now came forward, astride on horseback, and gazed intently at us. Some of the officers took off their hats to them, which courtesy was returned. As the steamer passed up, a fresh supply of fuel was thrown on the furnaces, creating a dense, black smoke, which fell on the group of observers, and half-smothered them. They appeared much amused by this, and rubbed their eyes with great animation.

Towards the upper end of this Barranca, the channel made a traverse over to the other side; and the vessel's stern for fully a mile was exposed to the cliffs, in an admirable and destructive position for guns. A well-arranged battery, properly manned and served at this point, might completely stop

the commerce of the river, as vessels going either up or down would expose themselves for some distance in the most vulnerable and least offensive part.

About an hour's more steam brought us alongside another Barranca of quite as formidable a character, with the exception of the traversing channel, as Punta Gorda. It was likewise higher, being nearly sixty or seventy feet; at one point the channel ran so close under it, that a stone might easily have been pitched down the funnel by a man on its summit.

At this point, two figures suddenly appeared on horseback, rode fearlessly down an inclination in the cliff, and gazed at us. One of them turned out to be a lady, although wearing a man's hat. She jumped off her horse, and, by very significant gestures, demanded a light from her companion, who, like an obedient husband, immediately struck one. She then commenced smoking with great composure, and graciously smiled when an officer on the paddle-box took his hat off to her. The trees, filling the interstices of the barrancas, swarmed with parroquets, like

starlings in England, and enlivened the scene by the beauty of their plumage, and constant chattering and screeching.

At eleven o'clock, a large vessel was perceived a-head, which, on approaching it, was discovered to be the French corvette, Coquette, to whom we delivered a packet of letters. Shortly after, two more vessels were seen in the distance; these were immediately signalized, and proved to be H. M. Ships, Philomel and Dolphin.

Suddenly, the Alecto struck violently, so much so, that her funnel and masts quivered again. After two more bumps on she went. At the moment she struck, there were seven fathoms under her bows, and three under each paddle-wheel. Various surmises were made upon the nature of the obstacle, but not one sufficiently satisfactory to record; the mystery, therefore, is unsolved to this day, and will not be cleared up until the vessel goes into dock.

The last twelve miles were extremely difficult from the intricacy of banks and shoals; but by great luck we had a most admirable pilot, whose bravery, good-con-

duct, and skill, commanded the respect and best wishes of every person in the ship. At half-past twelve, we cast anchor close to the Philomel and Dolphin, and abreast of the city of the Parana, the capital of the province of Entre Rios. On the left bank, about three or four leagues up a creek, but out of our sight, was the city of Santa Fé, capital of the province of that name.

The delight and excitement of the two English vessels were extreme, as we gave them letters and news without end, no intelligence having been received by them from England for three long months. We heard likewise the unwelcome information that General Paz was retreating before General Urquieza, the Governor of Entre Rios, who was fully engaged upon the invasion of Corrientes, thus turning the tables on Paz. In the event of General Urquieza getting possession of the Barrancas of the Province of Corrientes, and determining to use the guns at his command, it may prove an awkward business for poor Alecto, inasmuch as the position of the Barrancas in question is described as worse for us than any we have

yet seen. We heard here, likewise, that Sir Charles Hotham, our Chief, had gone up in the Gorgon as far as she could ascend, and then proceeded in the prize schooner, Obligado, taken at the action of that name.

As the despatches were of importance, it was decided to lose no time, but be off as soon as possible. At four o'clock, therefore, we were once again under weigh. Several very ugly and awkward looking Barrancas were passed before sun-set; after which, contrary to our usual custom, we proceeded. At the last anchorage, our pilot gave up his charge, very properly informing the Captain that he was unacquainted with the river any higher than the City of Parana. Our continuing to advance, as we did, was owing entirely to the knowledge and skill of Captain Sulivan of the Philomel, who had made a survey of the river a short time previously, and who, in spite of the darkness of night, and intricacy of channel, succeeded at ten P.M. in safely conducting the vessel to the anchorage, where H.M.S. Gorgon, and the Fanny, Tender, were lying. That we, a single light-armed steamer, with a handful of men, could, so many

hundred miles up a hostile river, go on peacefully and securely in a navigation of which the natives themselves are perfectly ignorant, created feelings of exultation." Here the anchor was cast for the night, and great satisfaction and joy were diffused through those on board the Gorgon and the Fanny by the letters and mails which were immediately delivered to them.

As it was of great importance, in the present state of affairs, to ascertain the success or otherwise of our ally, General Paz, it was decided, that the Alecto should lighten herself as much as possible by delivering all spare provisions and stores to the Gorgon, and then proceed, if possible, to Corrientes, taking the Fanny, Tender, in tow, which luckily had fifty tons of coal on board. By looking at the chart, it will be perceived that ever since the Alecto left the Plata, she had been steaming nearly due north, which, in the southern hemisphere, had diminished the distance considerably towards the Equator. It will not, therefore, be surprising to any one that the heat had been gradually increasing.

This night was passed very uncomfortably from the sultry state of the atmosphere, and great annoyance of the mosquitoes, which appeared much larger and more venomous than usual. The perseverance, cunning, and quickness of these insects is beyond belief; nothing appears to keep them off, and no texture, however thick or close, is a defence against their poisonous probosces. The only effective precaution was to sleep forty feet above the level of the river. The sailors of the Philomel and Gorgon had taken advantage of this knowledge; and tops, yards, and stays, were crowded with hammocks, as the men considered it far preferable to risk their necks at this altitude, than expose themselves to the fearfully irritating effects of the mosquito bite or sting.

Friday, February 13. On starting this morning according to former arrangement, the Fanny was made fast astern, and we proceeded at a reduced speed of course. Captain Sulivan continued to take charge of the pilotage. The country began rapidly to assume a more tropical character; and the heat likewise to increase. The vegetation

also became darker and more luxuriant. At one o'clock, we passed a fine stag, laving himself in the river. Unluckily, the rifles, although always supposed to be ready, were not so at this moment, and he therefore escaped.

We soon came to a sandy bank three or four feet out of the water. The pilot, still on board, but now not acting, told us seriously, that three years ago when coming down from Paraguay, he had sailed completely over the spot where the sand-bank now appeared.

Towards the evening, we passed a Barranca somewhat similar to the chalky cliffs of Kent. A peculiarity was observed here which made it an exception to any other cliff in the river: the channel, instead of keeping along the cliffs its usual course, chose the opposite, or low marshy side, quite an anomaly in the Parana, and suddenly, towards the termination of the high land turned towards it, reversing its usual tendency. The channel now became occasionally extremely intricate, sometimes barely wide enough to turn the corners

with full power on; and sometimes the angles were so sharp that the course was suddenly altered ten points. Towards sun-set, we cast off the Fanny, and came-to near the river Hondo, and a high and abrupt Barranca, a very strong current, nearly four knots, running down against us.

This completed the twelfth day's steaming to the utmost of our power and speed, using the first grade of expansion to save fuel.

Saturday, February 14. Almost immediately after starting this morning, we entered a labyrinth of islands which completely excluded any view of either bank of the river. As this was certainly a strange feature at so long a distance from the mouth, I took the trouble to examine the view from the mast-head, and, to my great amazement, was unable with a spy-glass to assure myself that I beheld the main land on either side. Just before we entered this aquatic maze, we perceived a goodly-sized troop of cavalry; but, as it was very near the confines of the provinces of Corrientes and Entre Rios, we could not tell whether they were friends or foes. One very suspicious cir-

cumstance induced a belief that a battle, or skirmish, had taken place recently, for a number of Caranchos, a species of vulture, hovered and wheeled about in the same direction. This was, however, purely conjecture, as many other causes might congregate these birds.

Some of the little natural coves and inlets were extremely pleasing in appearance; and had they been seen in the navigation of a European river, would have been attributed to some millionaire afflicted with good taste. In a great many instances, the islands hereabout are higher out of the water than those below, giving an impression that, as the voyager advances towards the source, the alluvial soil has acquired a greater elevation. Several plants and trees were here remarked which generally on the sea-board are only found in the tropics. The increasing heat was most oppressive.

A very curious circumstance, and one which, at any rate either proves the climate of this part of the world to be materially altered, or else impugns the medical treatment of the wounded in the disastrous expe-

dition of General Whitelock, is that all our wounded men, as well as those who suffered in the battle of Obligado, had no bad symptoms, and became rapidly convalescent. In former expeditions, we are told that few, if any, of the wounded escaped. Tetanus almost always supervened, and carried off any person who had the slightest abrasion of the skin from a bullet or sabre wound.

At two o'clock in the afternoon, we had to struggle through a very narrow passage with a violent current. Immediately after passing this place, we found ourselves in an open lake four or five miles across. The great difficulty now was to find the channel, as the water abounded in banks and ledges of sand. Twice or thrice was it necessary to anchor, and sound a-head; but after several hours' exertion to overcome these obstacles, we safely passed through. As the channel now contracted again, it was natural enough, from former experience, to conclude that the water would be deeper; but we were mistaken, as we found the water suddenly shoaled from twelve fathoms to thirteen feet. Of course the orders were, "Stop her!" "Stand by anchor!"

"Back turn!" "Let go anchor!" which commands were immediately obeyed.

As the passage proved, on sounding, to be intricate and tortuous, it was settled that we should remain for the night. Only two boats being employed sounding with a few men, it was arranged to haul the seine, or net, and try our luck on a sand bank, about eighteen inches out of water, in the middle of a stream favorable for the purpose. The party, therefore, started in a very enthusiastic mood, with great promises of perseverance; but alas! almost immediately upon landing, their attention was so diverted from their original intention by the appearance of great numbers of young birds which covered the bank, that, forgetting all their former promises, they spread abroad in the greatest state of confusion and excitement, and began to bag birds by the hundred. These were of a species resembling in appearance the common English sea-gull, and therefore called by us "Fresh water gulls," for fresh water they must have been, as they were more than five hundred miles, as the crow flies, from salt water. From feeding

entirely on fresh water productions, their flesh was remarkably well tasted and good. To retrieve their credit, the party had, afterwards, a haul or two with the seine, and caught a few fine fish; but it was clear that little skill was exerted, as the Parana absolutely swarms with the finny tribe.

Towards night, the mosquitoes came down upon the ship in swarms. All hands suffered a complete martyrdom from the attacks of the tormentors. However tired or exhausted any person might be, it was perfectly useless to attempt to sleep; and the extreme annoyance was sufficient to drive one mad. Some of us (the officers) whose beds were protected by muslin, or mosquito curtains, had countless multitudes clinging just outside, so that the gauze looked quite black. Although, when in bed, protected from their bites, the buz, or hum, was so loud that it was impossible to sleep with any comfort. To the officers, or men, with fair complexion, these insects were ten times more irritating. Their sufferings cannot be estimated; but even to a swarthy and well-tanned tropical complexion, it was eminently distressing.

Sunday, February 15. About fifteen minutes before real daylight, which nautically speaking, is when one can see a grey mare a mile, though it is made so before a gray mare could be discerned ten yards, the Alecto was once again under steam, progressing upwards. The difficulties and dangers increased as we advanced, which nothing but the prior passage, and admirable survey of Captain Sulivan would have overcome. It was all plain sailing as long as we had the Costa Brava, or bold shore, to run along, which is so steep that frequently our hats were brushed away by branches of trees which swept with no slight force across the paddle box as we were struggling up. But as the Costa Brava is generally formed, either by a great contraction of the river's channel, or a sweep of the current, bounded by a Barranca, the navigation becomes proportionally difficult when the stream swells out to a great breadth, and thus necessarily gives a broader and shallower channel to the passage of this enormous body of water. Diagonally over these, run what the bacchianos call traversiers, which are so abrupt and angular in their

turns that it is impossible to compare them to any thing but a place like Lymington creek at high water, the tortuosity ten times aggravated. This any one will allow is dreadful work for a vessel of 820 tons, and is indeed the time for officers to show their knowledge and quickness, and keep the leads, engines, boats, and helm under perfect command and readiness. Frequently this day have we had seven fathom under one paddle box, and twelve feet under the other, evidently on the edge of the bank; and again nine fathom under the Dolphin striker, and twelve feet a few inches under each paddle box.

The extraordinary variations in the soundings made it necessary to graduate the lead-lines, under three fathoms, to feet, which was always given with great emphasis by the leadsman, who became very expert, and commanded the attention of the officer in charge. As frequently the river was a mile wide, it is easy for any naval man to estimate the difficulty of hitting these deceiving and tortuous channels. Often and often, poor "grimy nigger," as the men of the Alecto were fond of calling her, bumped and bumped again;

but this was so frequent, that certainly no notice was taken of it more than the usual exclamation forward, "Well, I'm blest! a-shore again!"

This day was remarkable for the great change perceptible in the vegetable and animal kingdoms on either bank. The tropical productions are rapidly superseding the denizens of a more temperate climate. Each day, as we approached the equator, have we observed a material change, and the last day more marked than ever. The Author was extremely amused, just as he had jotted down the preceding remarks in his diary, to overhear an observation to the effect, that not the slightest difference appeared from the entrance of the river to this point in the Parana!

Stately palms are now becoming plentiful, interspersed with various other curious and tropical coniferæ, which rear their graceful heads, in a pleasing contrast, above the surrounding dark and luxuriant vegetation. It strikes one with astonishment, that this river, running so many hundred miles almost entirely through a large swampy alluvial plain, with all the characteristics

of the African and central American rivers, should, instead of having the same destructive climate, be blessed with an extraordinarily healthy air, more so than most rivers in Europe.

Wherever a landing was effected, the sand was found completely covered by foot-prints of tigers, some of enormous size, so large indeed that both hands spread out would hardly cover one. These were comparatively rare; but proof enough existed of their numbers. The pilots declared it was certain death to be on shore after sunset, unless with a large party well armed; and, even then, the risk would be very great. This was variously taken on board, some laughing at it as a humbug; but one thing was very certain, namely, that in any party on shore, great alacrity was always shewn in getting the boat shoved off before the sun had quite disappeared.

Towards evening the passage became so intricate and puzzling, that although the sun was two good hours above the horizon, it was considered best to anchor, sound the channel, and proceed next day.

CHAPTER V.

Shallow Channel—Sufferings of Convoy's Crews—Monkeys—Guaranis Indians—Steam, versus Sailing Vessels—Confidence of Men requisite for Officers to excite their Energies—Large Haul of Fish—Precautions against Insects—News of a Collision of Armies—Tactics of General Paz—Beef procured for Convoy—Herds of Cattle—Singular natural Pillars on Barrancas—Orange Groves—The Alecto strikes—Preparations to forward Mails by Land—Scaling the Cliff—The Interpreter's mishap—The Messenger departs—Don Oriental Martinez—Failure to Heave the Alecto Off.

MONDAY 16th. The channel was found to be only twelve feet deep, with a cross current in several places, and so abrupt that it was considered advisable to lash the Fanny alongside, or, in nautical parlance, "to shoulder her." This was done to avoid the current in the sharp turnings driving her out of channel, and, of course, dragging her on to the mud-

With an hour's anxious work we cleared this pass, and soon afterwards observed several sail a-head, being part of the convoy which had sailed from Monte Video about the time that the Alecto was commissioned at Woolwich. It will, therefore, give a pretty convincing proof of the enormous advantage of steam, particularly in these rivers; for as many weeks had been expended by these sailing vessels in arriving at this point as the Alecto had expended days.

The change in the appearance of the vegetation is still going on, and clumps of bamboos are now perceived on the banks, growing luxuriantly to a very great size. At noon, we communicated with the vessels, and delivered letters, and news from Monte Video. This portion of the convoy was in a very bad state for want of provisions, having had nothing fresh since leaving Obligado. Several of their men were suffering from scurvy.

The banks were now clothed with a dense tropical forest, beautiful creepers climbing up and festooning in fantastic and elegant shapes. Several monkeys were seen, chattering and

grinning. Their grotesque antics much amused the officers and men, especially when a rifle ball cut a twig close to them, or otherwise disarranged their composure, and excited their rage.

The left bank, wherever the forest partially cleared, was filled with dense volumes of smoke, made by the Guaranis Indians, in burning the herbage before rain, which the Pamparos, at this season, bring in immense quantities. These Indians are a very warlike and brave race, although ferocious and cruel. They have never been conquered, and roam in a state of wild freedom from within a few leagues of the vicinity of Santa Fé to the Cordillera, or Andes.

About five o'clock, the passage was much narrowed by islands; in one place it was not above three hundred yards, with an extremely strong current. As the Fanny was a heavy weight, we had a very hard tug to get along at all; and after struggling more than half an hour, succeeded in rounding the point which contracted and strengthened the current. We now immediately came in view of several more vessels of the convoy, who, being better

sailers, or less frequently on shore, had managed to get on thus much farther than their brethren. These were, if possible, worse off than the former, and almost in a state of starvation. Not a morsel of meat was left amongst them; and serious cases of malignant scurvy appeared on board. We were very much surprised to find that the crews could not find food in this beautiful river, which absolutely teems with animal life. But it is difficult to explain the disinclination of sailors to exert themselves in an unusual pursuit for their own advantage, unless directed by the knowlege and perseverance of officers educated and brought up amongst them.

Towards evening, we arrived amongst the most advanced body of the convoy, which consisted of the fastest, and best equipped, of the whole. These were, indeed, glad enough to hear any news of Europe; but still more delighted to obtain listeners to their recital of hardships and privations. We heard this with great patience, but did not pity them, inasmuch as their sufferings arose wholly from want of enterprise and energy.

The vessel was here brought to for the night; a party was immediately dispatched to fish, and fortunately with much more success than on the former occasion. A very great haul was secured. Amongst the most remarkable of the contents, was a small electric eel, which, for its size, gave a strong shock when grasped with both hands. Although so many hundred miles from the sea, some fish, exactly resembling the common English plaice, brill, small thick turbot, and numerous others of singular form and shape, were taken.

This night the mosquitoes were worse than ever; the author felt free from actual bites beneath his well-fitted and transparent curtains, unless when inadvertently, in restlessly turning round in bed, his knee touched the gauze enclosure. If this happened, a dozen stings were inflicted, and left on the knee inflamed lumps which remained for a week. At midnight, on going on deck, the following precautions were taken to guard against the flies, but without effect. In the first place, sea boots, well oiled, were put on; then a pair of trousers made of a very stout blanketing,

drawn closely over the ancle by a rope yarn tightly tied. Over all, a thick Flushing pea jacket, buttoned round the chin as if to withstand a north-east gale in the British channel, and two silk handkerchiefs stuffed in all round the neck. Another silk handkerchief covered the head, and was tied round the chin, and, surmounting all, a Jim Crow hat, rammed firmly down on the head as far as possible. To protect the hands, a very thick pair of strong worsted gloves. This, no doubt, might be extremely comfortable in the depth of winter in England, or even bearable in the hottest summer nights there; but in this climate, with the thermometer ninety degrees, it was perfect torture. In a few minutes, after getting on deck, every article of clothing was perfectly saturated with perspiration; the oppressive feelings of which caused some of the wrappings to be thrown off, and whatever part was exposed was immediately covered with the flying and buzzing pests. Those officers who had neglected to get curtains, passed the whole of this night either on the top of the paddle boxes or up the rigging; it was perfectly impossible to remain below,

every cabin under deck being crowded by mosquitoes,

"As thick and numberless ...
As the gay motes that people the sun-beams."*

The author retired to bed very much fatigued, at four A.M.; and, on arising in the morning, discovered that, except his head, every part of his body and limbs, without any exception, was covered with red, and irritable bumps. We had been informed by officers at Santa Fé that several sailors had been invalided from the effects of mosquito bites.

Tuesday, February 17th. On starting, we took the boats of several merchant vessels in tow, and also a boat of the gallant San Martin, a French man of war, with an officer and crew. These boats were taking advantage of the Alecto's steam power to reach Goya, a town of the province of Corrientes, in possession of our ally, General Paz, where it was fully expected that plenty of fresh beef would be procured for the starving crews of the

* Milton.—"*Il Penseroso.*"

convoy. Although only about twenty miles, it was utterly impossible for manual labour to pull up against the strong current which, in some places, at this height in the river, runs four knots. About noon, we approached the barrancas once again on the Entre Rios side, and at two o'clock anchored off a large estancia well stocked with cattle. We were immediately assured of its being a friendly place by boats coming off to us, and not only telling us all the latest news from the armies, but likewise bringing huge and fat quarters of beef.

We here learnt that a collision had taken place between Generals Paz and Urquieza. The second in command of General Paz, Don Juan Madariago, who commanded one wing of the army, had been taken prisoner; and, as a balance, Urquieza had lost a large number of his horses, in consequence of the masterly retreating manœuvres of Paz, who led his adversary's steeds, accustomed to a dry sandy country, into a marshy part of the great Ybera Lagoon, (*vide chart*). His own chargers were perfectly familiarized to this morass; but it almost immediately proved

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fatal to the vigour of the strange cavalry, which, in these countries, is the main strength of armies. This was pleasing intelligence for us, as it showed that the enemy had not quiet possession of the barrancas. Had their position on the cliffs been undisputed, and had they been hostilely inclined, it would have been quite impossible to return with any safety.

In the afternoon, the news was confirmed by a chasque, or express, which arrived from Corrientes. Beef was now a drug, and all the boats we had towed up with us returned to their proper vessels loaded to the gunnel. We lay abreast of a deserted encampment of four thousand Paraguayan troops who had recently reinforced General Paz. The huts forming this station were built in the simplest form, and of the materials nearest at hand, namely, long grass and sticks. The very small space occupied by this encampment, of which the area was only about half an acre, caused in us some little astonishment. But the habits of the people are so simple, and their wants so few, that the smallness of accommodation for such a body of men

as had been here asssembled, was unfelt by them.

Wednesday, February 18th. With a plentiful supply of beef, we again found ourselves steaming on with the Fanny alongside; and being now assured of going up to the capital city of the province, we felt great exhilaration of spirits; more particularly as we should then be in the immediate vicinity of the far-famed Paraguay. The barrancas we now passed, were not so critically scrutinized for guns, but were still occasionally of a very dangerous character to annoy the trade of the river. Immense herds of cattle, as far as the eye and spy-glass could reach, extending inland, did not excite such longing desire as we felt previously to our arrival at Goya.

The character of the barrancas to-day changed considerably. Instead of the heretofore steep and perpendicular sides, they were either broken into deep ravines, or sloped gently down to the water's edge. Occasionally a large slip had evidently taken place, leaving singular pillars projecting twenty to thirty, and, perhaps, some as high as forty, feet. These remarkable projections

brought very forcibly to mind what every railway traveller must have observed in England, where small pyramidal columns are left by workmen in the places whence a deep layer of earth has been taken; only here the pillars were gigantic. Various ingenious theories were started as to how these could have been formed; they were evidently not the work of art.

Large clusters, or clumps of orange trees are now frequent. This sprinkling, as it were, of deep green verdure, adds greatly to the embellishment of the landscape, and stands out in bold relief to the somewhat faded appearance of country from a fortnight's drought, and almost vertical, and cloudless sun.

I was about to describe more fully the appearance of the river, when a loud and harsh grating noise called every hand on deck. The paddles had been in full motion; but were now stopped, and reversed; though, in consequence of the unfortunate preponderance of bulk over power, not in time to prevent a repeated, and again repeated, bump and grind as she still continued to forge a-head.

Unluckily, it was the sternmost and deepest part of the ship which took the ground; therefore the instant she lost her way, her head began to fall off under the influence of the rapid current. At this moment, by a simultaneous cry of three leadsmen, the depth of water was as follows:—three fathoms under bows, two under stern, and two and a half under each paddle-box. "Let go the anchor!" was instantly exclaimed, in hope of keeping her head to the current. But alas! it was a desperate remedy against such a stream, which increased in power and force, as the ship's head fell off. The anchor, therefore, had not the slightest effect; and she continued to whirl round until her line of length was at an angle of forty-five degrees from her upward course very nearly across the river. For a moment she brought up in this position, until, gradually yielding to the increasing force of the obstructed water, she lifted bodily in jerks and throes, and settled herself finally, and apparently immovably, on a bank with one foot less water than she drew, heeling over several degrees.

Little Fanny, who until now had done nothing but slumber under our wing and impede our progress, was quickly brought into use, and immediately sent away with anchors to lay out where the soundings denoted the most likely channel of release. As soon as every preparation was made, the purchases were attached, and a heavy strain hove on the cable; but unfortunately without success, as the anchors immediately came home. When this was perceived, it was clear that some delay must take place before the Alecto would be afloat. And as Captain Austen was ever anxious to forward the public service with the greatest dispatch, he sent for the author and desired him to go on shore, find some inhabitants, communicate with the nearest alcalde or other authority, and demand horses, guides, and an escort to convey Her Britannic Majesty's mails to the senior naval officer at Corrientes.

This, though apparently simple, was rather an awkward mission; for, although we had been informed, and fully believed, that the inhabitants of this part of the country were

friendly, yet, after steaming so many hundred miles up the river, with hostile demonstrations almost every day, and the people not only ready and willing, but evidently anxious to cut our throats, it was almost impossible to divest oneself of the idea that the present vicinity might be hostile too; it can hardly be surprising, therefore, that some degree of apprehension was felt in having to land alone and unarmed.

Desiring the interpreter to follow, the author immediately landed under a high Barranca, and not being able to see any path or beaten tract, began to scale the cliff. This, however, was no easy undertaking, as the loose, sandy soil of which it was composed crumbled under foot and slid downwards, many times causing much tedious and laborious climbing to be lost in a moment by a sudden fall. Fortunately, the looseness and softness of the soil prevented any injury. At length a point was reached, where an awkward impediment was encountered. In an endeavour to overcome a sharp ledge, a large tuft of grass was clutched. At this moment the Alecto was close underneath,

and the attention of all on board was immediately attracted to the author's position—half-way up the cliff. He could plainly hear their exclamations, "There he goes!" "Well done!" "He's up!" "No, he isn't!" "He'll tumble down!" "No, he wont!" "Yes, he will!" The tuft gradually gave way, and the soil into which the climber's foot was stuck, slowly crumbled likewise. The author felt he must fall, to the great amusement of most, and fear of a few who had a little fore-thought. The annoyance and mortification of knowing that all eyes were directed upon him, quite overpowered the anticipation of consequences, and down he came fifteen or twenty feet, knocking head-over heels the poor interpreter, who was underneath.

A little more observation of the cliff shewed a better place, and in a few minutes with some difficulty, the author found himself on the top of the Barranca, looking right down on the steamer. After a short rest, and emptying the dirt and gravel that had got into his shoes, he proceeded inland in quest of inhabitants, first

venting his indignation against the unfortunate interpreter, who was stuck half-way up the cliff, by abusing him roundly for not following.

A few hundred yards inland I* perceived three horsemen, towards whom I advanced with my arms spread as a sign that I had no weapons, and wished to communicate with them. They remained perfectly still, watching me intently, but evidently prepared for instant flight. On approaching, I found them to be two boys of Spanish descent, and a very handsome Guaranis Indian. The former had on a kind of caricature of an Irish beggar's inexpressible; the latter literally nothing, except a large Gaucho spur on one naked heel. All the rest of their figures was exposed to the burning rays of an afternoon sun. I immediately addressed them with "Viva Patria!" and by signs and coaxing gestures intimated my desire that they would ap-

* As the author is now describing his own personal adventures in conveying Her Majesty's mails over this unknown region, he will, for convenience, adopt, in the text, the first person.

proach the edge of the cliff. Some trouble was, however, experienced in persuading them to do this, as the top of the Alecto's funnel just appeared above it, and was then sending forth huge volumes of black smoke, which to these poor demi-savages was sufficiently terrifying. Nevertheless, by dint of amicable signs, after the smoke had diminished, I succeeded in drawing them to the required position; but even then their faculties were so completely absorbed by the appearance of the steamer, which was lying broadside on to the stream, making a vast noise and splash with her paddles like a huge struggling monster, that for many minutes I could not get them to attend to the interpreter, who still remained in his former position half-way up the cliff. At length our wishes being explained to them in Spanish, the young Indian spoke some words to his companions, dashed his single spur into his horse, and away they all galloped like madmen.

Having dispatched this part of the business, I picked out the most inclined and soft part of the cliff, and slid down to my com-

panion, very much to the detriment of my lower clothing. In about an hour's time a troop of Gauchos came down with the commandant of the nearest village; they were extremely civil and obliging, and Don Oriental Martinez, the commandant, promised as many horses as we required. Upon asking him if we could purchase any bullocks, his answer (through the interpreter, of course), was given with that profound dignity so characteristic of the Spaniards: "We sell not; thou art welcome to an hundred!" As the corals* were some distance off, we were informed that it was impossible to fetch the horses until next morning; therefore, making an appointment for the Don to visit the ship at that time, we bade a courteous and ceremonious adieu, and returned to the Alecto.

With all our labour, it was found impossible to move the vessel; and although the greatest exertions were made during the whole night, assisted by the men of the Fanny, she was still lying broadside on to

* A kind of pound where horses are kept ready for use.

the stream, the current heeling her over considerably. As the distance by land to Corrientes was reported to be thirty-two leagues, it would have been inadvisable for me to waste my physical strength in taking an active part on deck. I therefore husbanded all my vigour and went coolly to bed. It was fortunate for the quick conveyance of the mails that I took this precaution, as nothing in the world puts a man more out of condition, particularly for a long ride, than living on board a vessel; and although the quick and active tramp overhead on deck, and the exhilarating sound of a large body of men actively at work, made me long very much to be amongst them, yet prudence conquered; and, using the power I possess of sleeping whenever and wherever I choose, when in health, I was speedily wrapped in profound slumber, in spite of the noises before mentioned, and the bumping and jerking of the vessel's bottom on hard sand.

CHAPTER VI.

Preparation of Mail Bags—Extent of Bellia Vista—Worn-out Cavalry Horses—Efficacy of *Plata*—Description of Chasque—The Escort—Amusement of Rabble—Montaneiros Blancos—Fortunate Thought—Aspect of Country—Natural Reservoirs—Aquatic Birds—Reception for the Night—Dinner—Young Ladies—Beautiful Scene—Miscellaneous Assemblage—Diabolical Laughter—The stealthy Blow—Horrible Chorusses.

THURSDAY, February 19th. At day-light, the mails were divided, and safely stowed away in two large leather bags, which were then well-stitched together by the sailmaker,

in preparation for slinging them across a horse's back. For my own comfort, I stored a few necessaries in a small carpet bag. I was equipped also with a double-barrelled gun, and a brace of long, large bored pistols.

After a very ample and substantial breakfast, we proceeded in the Fanny's whale boat to the town of Bellia Vista, consisting of three open sheds and a guard-house, but did not get safely landed there until past nine o'clock, from the extreme strength of the current. On the beach, we again met the commandant, who explained to us that although he had sent off early in the morning, the horses had not as yet arrived. We remained here for some time, sitting on the mail bags and smoking cigars. At length some miserable nags appeared, which were only intended to convey us to the nearest coral, a mile off, where better steeds were to be had. On arriving here, another and more vexatious delay took place, for which no necessity existed; but, as former experience had shewn the utter impossibility and folly of attempting to hurry a Spaniard, we were constrained to put the best face upon the

matter. About three P.M. a dozen horses arrived, and sorry-looking beasts they were.

Just as we were prepared to start, a great difficulty arose. The government found horses, and guides, and escort; but they never dreamed of saddles; and the horse intended for me, was standing bare-backed, with a lasso round his neck. The never failing efficacy of *Plata* immediately produced a recao, or country saddle and bridle, for which I had to pay through the nose. I did not much like this, as the purchase was on Government account, and certainly not worth a quarter of the sum I was compelled to pay. But "forward with speed," was my order, and likewise most anxious desire; and I was well aware that this was the only way to get on. Every thing was soon arranged: the mail bags securely lashed across one horse; a Gaucho or postillion on another, leading the mail horse, round whose neck was tied a long strip of hide, and then attached firmly to his horse's tail. Close behind the mails, I rode in a straw hat and shooting jacket, with pistols all ready for use in the saddle. The postillion carried my

double gun, loaded with ball, but without caps, so that I had nothing to fear from him. Whenever it was necessary during the journey, I took it from him, put caps on, and was instantly prepared for anything. On either side, a little in the rear, rode the two men I had as escort and guide. As I deemed it useless to take more, I selected the son of the commandant as one, and the serjeant of the guard as the other. Both were powerful and intelligent young fellows, and well they answered my expectation, proving to be good and true men, well up to the work.

The whole tag-rag and bob-tail of the village assembled to see the start of this magnificent chasque, or express, from, "La Reina de Inglaterra," to the President of Corrientes. On my attempting to mount, they were all convulsed with merriment at the futile attempt to introduce the toe of my boot into the Gaucho stirrup, which was only intended for a man's naked toe. This was speedily remedied by thongs of leather tied to the stirrup, so as to admit three inches of boot, and thus support the leg.

Before we arrived at our journey's end, my foot was very much swollen by the pressure of hide thongs, which did not entirely subside for two months.

The start was at last accomplished; but the horses were wretched animals, having recently been sent from Paz's army, who had captured them from General Urquieza. As they had just undergone the fatigue of a forced march of several hundred miles, it is not surprising that we could hardly urge them beyond a walk.

It may be as well here to mention a precaution I took, and which I feel confident not only enabled me to perform the journey with more ease to myself, but much greater expedition than it was natural to expect from a person so completely out of condition as I was after so long a residence on board a vessel. I cannot forbear, therefore, strongly recommending it to any one who may be thus called upon in a hurry, under the same circumstances. When I first started, the thongs that supported my legs were let out so much, that there was hardly any support at all; and as fatigue gra-

dually came on, so were the thongs shortened, thus bringing fresh muscles constantly into play. When, therefore, I arrived at Corrientes, my stirrup leathers were drawn up to about the length with which I would cross the country in England after fast hounds.

Two long, weary hours, did it take to get to the first post-house, or estancia, which was certainly the most wretched hovel it is possible to conceive. Although this poverty of appearance was common to every post-house on the journey, still the people were wealthy in lands, cattle, and horses. A few deer and ostriches which were passed, took no more notice of us than a flock of sheep in a field in England.

On arriving, Martinez produced the government authority for horses, and immediately a little naked urchin scrambled up on one of these animals, always tied to the posts of the coral, and gallopped off in search of those belonging to the place. In about half an hour, a large cloud of dust in the distance announced the approach of a body of animals, and immediately after a herd of fifty or sixty horses galloped into

the coral. My men flourished their lassos, and speedily noosed the number required; we therefore soon resumed our journey. These horses were infinitely faster and better than the last, but still far from the best.

About two leagues from this post, as we were going steadily along, Martinez and the sergeant began to prepare their arms, and, looking rather disturbed, motioned me to take my double gun. A short distance further on, they rode up and pointed eagerly to what I imagined were a small group of horses, exclaiming "Montaneiros, Montaneiros, Blancos, Blancos!"* urging me by signs to proceed at full speed. Before acceding to their request, I took a good look at the object indicated, and observed that the men were standing quite still, and that our path passed them within less than half a mile. I considered by far the best plan would be to go steadily along, reserving our horses' strength, and making

* The Montaneiros Blancos are a wild and lawless banditti, deserters from both armies, who strike terror into all parties by their murders and robberies.

every preparation for receiving the montaneiros warmly. My two men, having closed up on each side of the mail horse, we proceeded slowly at a walk, and at length came abreast of the bandits, who all the time narrowly watched our motions. Martinez afterwards told me, through an interpreter, that their horses were tired, and that they did not like the look of my gun which I was then carrying on my shoulder, besides which they had nothing but spears. It was impossible, under any circumstances, that I could run away from six or eight banditti, and leave my mails. We were therefore perfectly easy, knowing the efficacy of our arms.

As I felt the journey was very long and rough for the condition I was in, I considered it my duty to use every means in my power to avoid any delay which might accrue, had I been knocked up. Reflecting upon this subject, a thought struck me, which I immediately decided upon adopting, and which had the most happy consequences. It was no less than interesting the ladies in my behalf, who frequently procured me, when almost exhausted with heat and drought, the only

ripe oranges on the trees, or, when they had them, delicious, cool, water lemons. My tactics were as follow: Whenever I saw children, (who, indeed, abounded nearly every where,) I sat down in the shade, coaxed the boldest-looking little red-skins towards me, and tried to acquire their confidence. Having secured this, (the mother anxiously looking on all the time), I pulled out a box of Lucifer matches, and tempted the naked urchins to strike a light. This had a very favourable effect, because it is considered a rare and valuable accomplishment, in these countries, to procure fire quickly. Wonder and applause, evident in the animated voices of the ladies to their husbands, always followed the above display The result was, that although all the horses were again saddled and waiting, the one intended for me was frequently changed for a better, and, most likely, easier-paced animal.

The country through which our route took us this day, was generally of a level character, with gentle undulations. In numerous places, the land had sunk a little; and wherever this had occurred, the concavity was filled with

water forming ponds of various sizes. These were literally crowded with water-fowl of all kinds. Little doubt can exist that these reservoirs are intended by nature to supply the animals inland with water; and when, from a protracted drought, these fail, horses and other quadrupeds must resort to the banks of the nearest river, and, in the universal scramble to procure water, perish in large numbers.

Enough game might have been killed in this day's ride to load a waggon; but our energies were otherwise directed. Towards evening, we left the open prairie, and entered a district partially wooded, which gradually became more picturesque and beautiful, and more thickly studded with horned cattle, horses, and sheep. Just as the sun was setting, we arrived at the estancia where we were to change horses. This was situated on a slight eminence, round which wound a shallow creek, or streamlet, absolutely alive with fish. As it was difficult to procure horses after dark, and still more so to find a way through these immense and trackless plains at night, we decided to remain until an hour before day-break.

When we dismounted, nothing could exceed the ceremonious politeness of the nearly naked Senors who became our hosts. Dinner (the best they had) was immediately ordered, soon prepared, and smoking before us. It consisted of beef, broiled, or rather singed, on the embers of a wood fire, then impaled on a common stick, skewerwise, and stuck into the ground beside us. We had also a large calabash full of delicious oranges picked from a tree in the enclosure or yard. By the time our primitive dinner was ready, we had unsaddled our steeds, and heaped all our traps, including mails, guns, pistols, ricao, bridle, &c., together. Then pulling out our knives, we squatted round our provisions, and immediately commenced the repast.

During our dinner, all the ladies of the family were intently watching us, and amusing themselves at our expense. Two were extremely pretty, but dressed in a fashion peculiar to this country. They had not a single article of clothing except a loose garment very low and very short. I cannot describe it better than by calling it half apron, half petticoat. Their glossy black hair was taste-

fully dressed. They were lolling in a high hammock close to us; and, whilst they kept their feet concealed, seemed, with their light red, but clear, complexions, to be very engaging. Their regular features, in spite of colour, plainly demonstrated their European extraction, and shewed a wide difference to the aboriginal features in the persons of the Guaranis Indians, many of whom were lounging about.

At nine o'clock, having arranged all my things as comfortably as circumstances would allow, with the mails for a pillow, and loaded fire-arms beside me, I tried to compose myself to sleep; but the excitement of the strange position I was in, entirely banished any thought of repose. I therefore lit my cigar, and took a survey of this wild and strange scene, lighted up by a most beautiful moon, and further irradiated by numerous fire flies flitting about the foliage of an orange tree close at hand, like so many erratic lamps.

Moving and lying about higgledy piggledy, were the numerous pets of the family, consisting of dogs, sheep, colts, fawns, goats, calves,

fowls, ducks, children, and a good sized tiger-cat, who all appeared to scramble and agree together with the utmost confidence and cordiality. In the orange tree were several parrots, which had acquired, from imitation, various human and bestial cries. The absurd clamour and gambols of this unique assembly were most extraordinary. Sometimes a profound stillness prevailed, only disturbed by the buzzing and low, gentle whistle of insects or lizards; and anon, as a small fleecy cloud momentarily shaded the brilliant moonlight, the fire-flies appeared to gain additional lustre, and to multiply into countless numbers. A light air, loaded with perfume, just gave a gentle motion to the leaves of the orange tree, from which proceeded a low wailing sob, as from a child, in great pain. This appeared to arouse a host of mourners. The sobbing was taken up by dozens of voices, apparently of all ages, until the chorus swelled into loud and agonizing grief.

"Bless my heart!" what on earth can this mean? thought I, rising up, cocking my pistols, and looking anxiously round

"'Rather skeary,' as brother Jonathan has it." For a short time, the distressing wail continued, and increased in painful chorus. I began really to be infected with melancholy feelings, when, suddenly, the concert was changed into loud and screaming laughter, which, after swelling into a perfect diapason, fell as if from utter exhaustion. The source of the sounds was at length revealed: they were produced by the rascally parrots in the orange trees. Sleep was quite out of the question until a late hour, as the parrots were continually, upon any disturbing cause, venting their screams of joy or sorrow, or pleasure or hate, as the fancy struck them.

My wakeful state brought on a train of thought. I wondered why so fertile and productive a soil, so salubrious and excellent a climate, so noble and extensive a river, should thus, as it were, be thrown out of the pale of the civilized world. Is it not a reflection upon old Spain, for treating her children in the manner she did, and keeping them in ignorance, for her own selfish advantage and profit? She richly deserves the fate she has drawn upon her-

self, by her treatment of these and other of her colonies.

Thus I passed the greater part of the night, until even the parrots were hushed into silence. At length, drawing my poncho over my head, I fully intended to get a good snooze, and had nearly succeeded, when a sudden blow on the head caused me to spring up and grasp my weapons. But nothing was to be seen more than I had observed in the earlier part of the night; and, after looking carefully round, I lay down again, taking especial good care that my pistols were handy for instant use. I had hardly composed myself a second time when the blow was repeated; but now, being wide awake, it felt like a sudden pressure. The poncho was instantly torn off my face, and up I sprang again, rather dismayed at this strange and sudden assault. But all was quiet and still, and motionless as before.

As it is very uncomfortable to be thus disturbed, I determined to remain on the watch, and stop the cause if possible, as, otherwise, I was certain no rest could be obtained.

I therefore composed myself again, only

drawing the poncho up to my chin, and in this position waited with every sense on the alert. In about five minutes, just as I was thinking myself mistaken or dreaming, a dark body passed swiftly over my face, giving me a good tap on the side of it. It was the tame tiger cat, gambolling and jumping over me. As my finger was on the hair trigger of my pistol, to rise, turn, and fire at it, as it was scrambling over a heap of hides, was instinctively done, before judgment could be used. The moment the deed was effected, I felt extremely wroth with myself, and ashamed, as I knew it would create a "flare-up" in the estancia. Luckily I had missed the tiger cat, so no bones were broken, and I thought the best plan would be to sham an accident. In the meantime, every soul had awoke, and the greatest consternation and alarm reigned amongst them, as the enemy's general, Urquieza, was known to be within thirty miles. The poor Estanceiros naturally thought it was a night attack.

As I could not speak ten words of Spanish, I considered the best plan would be to shew Martinez my discharged pistol, and by pan-

tomime explain it had gone off by accident, and nearly killed me. With this view I roared out "Martinez! Martinez! Martinez! halloo! *Mucho malo, mucho malo!* What a fool I am! Martinez come here, you idiot."

Upon his appearance, I tried to describe by signs how nearly I had lost my life, and what dangerous things the *pocate escopetos*, or little guns, were. This soon calmed the human hubbub, but aroused into hideous outcry all the animals, who, joining in chorus, rendered any man's rest, during the rest of the morning, perfectly impossible. We therefore immediately prepared our steeds, and about an hour before day-light went slowly on our journey.

CHAPTER VII.

Luxuriant Valley—Huge Tree—Benevolent Hostess—The ailing Child—Wealth, combined with extreme Poverty—Oppression of Atmosphere—Distress of Horses—Carpiteal—Detachment in charge of Paraguay Tea — A Mirage — Dreadful Distress — The Water—Instantaneous Relief—Woman's Kindness—Derangement of Electricity—The sudden Change—Dangerous Morass—The Ferry—Seamanship Eight Hundred Miles from the Sea—Baby Horsemen—Sensation created by Chasque, at Corrientes—Curious Cactus—Importance and Number of Cattle—Delight of the Authorities, at arrival of Chasque.

FRIDAY, February 20th. At day-light we increased our pace, and found the horses very much improved in quality, being even frisky and anxious to get on. Half-an-hour after the sun rose, we arrived at an estancia, snugly situated in a valley thickly wooded all

round. The lower parts were ornamented by some of the largest forest trees I had yet seen in South America. Through this valley ran a little streamlet, six or eight feet broad, as clear as crystal. The fish in it were not only visible in great numbers, but exceedingly bold and impudent, and quite as tame and voracious as the gold fish in the gardens of Hampton-court palace. A large spreading tree sheltered the estancia on one side; and its huge arms overshadowed the streamlet on the other, covering a large space of ground. The roots, which protrude much above the earth, furnish seats and lounging places for the whole family, bipeds and quadrupeds.

On dismounting to change horses, the lady of the house very graciously, but with evident marks of curiosity, to see the "important Chasque," left her bed, and came towards us, without changing her night dress, which in truth was a very scanty garment. She then took a calabash, and with an air of great dignity presented it to me, after having herself filled it from one of her sleek and beautiful cows. This was extremely grateful

and refreshing. As I had been told that these Estancieros were wealthy, and proud of their wealth, I determined to try if they were covetous of money. Therefore, making a ceremonious bow, I offered a bright new shilling. This was refused. I then made another bow, and offered a dollar, which was likewise refused. A doubloon shared a similar fate. At this moment, I took from my pocket a ship biscuit as an accompaniment to my calabash of milk. On observing this, I thought I perceived the eyes of my good hostess glisten. It was pleasant to believe that, at last, I possessed something worthy her acceptance. I was not deceived. With evident gratification, she took my very homely gift, and instantly withdrew into her house. The curiosity excited by a refusal of gold, and an acceptance of so comparatively worthless a thing, as I had at last offered, induced me to follow my hostess, whom I found feeding a sickly child, with the biscuit. She expressed, by her manner, as plainly as if she had spoken, that this was the very kind of sustenance the little ailing creature required as change of diet, flesh being the

only solid provisions at her command. Here, then, as in every other part of the globe, is the blessed affection of maternity paramount to all other feelings. Of course I left all my little stock of biscuit, glad enough to be the means of any good, however small.

On inquiry, I ascertained that my hostess and her family were rich in flocks and herds; which, however, brutal wars and disturbances had made quite valueless, communication and commerce with civilized countries being stopped by the contest in the Parana. As herds in this country multiply at the rate of at least one-half every year, it would be curious to observe ten years hence, if peace and security should be restored for so long a period, the changes that will take place from comparative indigence, to enormous wealth, when the "live stock" of the Estancieros become marketable. The Senor (my host) pointed out to me with great pride and satisfaction, immense herds, dotting the valley in every direction, all belonging to himself; and, to prove his good will, gave us five of his best horses to proceed with.

The whole scene was most charming and lovely, the only eye-sore in this little paradise being the human habitation, which not only offended the sight by its squalid misery, but was otherwise offensive.

With renovated spirits, caused by our hearty breakfast of new milk and biscuit, we again started, and I did my best to impress upon the mind of Martinez the necessity of putting the best leg foremost. There was now, however, nothing to delay us, as from the excellence of our fresh horses we were enabled to go off at a very rapid pace. I decided, if possible, to arrive at Corrientes the same night, and thus make up for the delay caused yesterday by the badness of the captured, and therefore worn out steeds. Martinez and the serjeant understood me well enough, but shook their heads, and pointed at me, giving me to understand that I could not maintain the pace, and should be done up long before we arrived at Corrientes. At any rate we rattled over the ground at full speed, and arrived at the next coral considerably within the hour. Again we procured capital horses, and the ground

being perfectly level and smooth, gallopped at full speed in high spirits.

For the last twenty miles, we had been approaching a bend in the river; and, on changing horses again, a broad white band, glittering in the sun like molten silver, was plainly visible miles in the distance, distinctly revealing the line of the Parana. The whole intervening space was completely covered with little variegated dots, denoting the myriads of cattle which fed on the luxuriant vegetation.

By this time, the sun had risen high enough to cause the most intense heat, which was very much aggravated by a total absence of wind, and the clouds of dust raised by our horses' feet. It was evident that a pamparo was brewing. By the time we had ridden two posts more at full speed, the oppression of the atmosphere and dry heat began to tell upon me, and caused intense thirst and feverish feeling, though every article of my dress was saturated with perspiration. The horses, too, although very good animals, were evidently much distressed before half their distance was

performed; and all this time the sun was rising, and the choking heat increasing. Another post was got through with difficulty by man and beast, the latter requiring continued goading to keep up the pace.

At length, covered with foam and dust, we arrived at the town or village of Carpiteal. Here it was necessary to get a fresh passport for my men. We were, therefore, obliged to ride up to the governor's house, to obtain his authority to proceed. A great and unnecessary delay took place here, as the governor was very busy sending off a detachment of mounted troops, in charge of Matte or Paraguay tea, for the army of General Paz, the head-quarters of which were within nine miles. Even after this detachment of wild cavalry gallopped off, much procrastination ensued, as it is absolutely impossible for any person, with Spanish blood in his veins, to dispatch any business without great ceremony. When my patience had completely evaporated, the old governor began to *visé* the passport. My impatience and irritation almost mastered my reason, as

he took nearly three-quarters of an hour to write one line.

At one o'clock, I once again started. The sun was nearly vertical; not a breath of air was abroad; and a hazy mirage covered the whole surface of the earth, twelve or fourteen feet high. I felt that the sun's rays were scorching up my very brains. As we advanced, the oppression increased; and, after riding two leagues, a horrible choking sensation came over me; my sight failed; I had barely strength to sit in my saddle, and my mouth, tongue, and throat, felt like baked parchment. The last league of the post was walked over, the horses evidently suffering nearly as much as ourselves. When we stopped to change, I delayed dismounting for a brief space, to collect my thoughts, which were indeed rather adrift at the moment. Upon looking up and around, I perceived, to my inexpressible delight, that I was close to the bank of a river, past which a rapid stream, clear as crystal, was running at the rate of three knots an hour This was a small creek (about as broad as the Thames at London-bridge), flowing towards

the Parana, eight hundred miles from the sea: the very view of the water relieved me. I stooped down and plunged my head into it with a feeling of most intense pleasure. I then tore off all my clothes, put them with arms, saddle gear, and mail bags, in the canoe that was waiting, unmindful, for once, of my charge; but gave Martinez strict injunctions to sit upon the mails. I then plunged headlong into the river, not inquiring, nor caring, if all the alligators on earth, or all the imps below, were there or not.

As a small sand bank appeared in the middle of the stream, I had a good rest there, and waited till the canoe had paddled round it. Then again plunging in the water, I was taken in tow, and soon gained the opposite bank. About one hundred yards from the landing place stood an estancia, where we were to procure fresh horses, to which after I had dressed, I was conducted by an elderly woman,

"On hospitable thoughts intent."

It would be impossible to give a sufficient idea of the wonderful refreshment I felt from

my bath. I was perfectly renovated, and felt quite a new man.

As soon as we entered the estancia, the good old lady produced a pot of Matte, which she presented with the greatest kindness. Of course I drank it off, although very nauseous, as it was not sweetened. She then produced several eggs, which she speedily boiled. I had, however, some difficulty in eating them decently as I had nothing but a knife to assist me. My attendants gobbled them down, not only with more decorum, but greater speed, proving that uncivilized life has *some* advantages.

After this refreshment, I started on a capital horse, with feelings of positive enjoyment. But the closeness of the air increased so much that, about a mile from the next post, the horses fairly gave in, and we had great difficulty in making any progress, even at a walk.

To relieve my poor beast, I dismounted and walked alongside him, to the surprise of my two men, who could not see why the suffering of a horse should be regarded. On again changing, we went off at full gallop.

When we had ridden half this post, my two fellows, every now and then, kept looking at me to see if I showed any signs of giving in. I really did begin to feel rather queer, but I was not going to show it to them; and when they were exchanging expressive glances with each other, as much as to say, "Well, I think he's nearly done now," I flourished the end of my bridle over my head, and bringing it down with a heavy thwack on my horse's shoulders, roared out, "*Vamos, Vamos!*" (Let us on—let us on!) which put them into an ecstacy of delight, and we all pressed forward, as if for very life.

Two leagues of this post were over the dry, dusty, and parched-up plain or prairie, where the mirage, or miasma, or haze, or whatever it may be called, was so thick, that the mail bags on the leading horse, although not ten yards a-head, appeared to tremble in the vibrating atmosphere. I feel convinced there must have been some extraordinary derangement of electricity, as the effect was accompanied by a peculiar, and almost sulphureous smell. Fortunately, at the end of these two leagues, the ground suddenly broke from its

level surface, and a slight descent took us into a dismal swamp. Although we all felt much relieved by the sudden change from dry, dusty plain, to splashing through mud and water, still I did not like it at all, as the clouds were louring all round in a most portentous manner, and Martinez informed me it was "*dos leaguas,*" (two leagues) across; and that "*Mucho Tigre,*" (many tigers) lived in it. Our horses, moreover, were nearly exhausted, and with difficulty scrambled through the mud and holes.

I ordered a halt, shouldered my double gun, putting caps on of course, and let the horses take a mouthful of the muddy and stagnant pool, almost entirely hidden by water lilies. This refreshed the poor beasts very much; and, in a few minutes we rattled on, sweeping through bog and mire, as hard as we could go, sometimes finding ourselves amongst a large flock of wild ducks, which rose in great clatter and confusion round us; and, when the ground was a little drier, a large deer would rise at a bound, and vanish with a spring achievable only by a frightened wild animal. The horses still floundered

very much, particularly the one bearing the heavy mail. Several times he was down, belly-deep in mud and slush. The poor brute was now nearly done up; and the serjeant, when a more desperate flounder than usual, took place, drew his sabre, gave a howl, and goaded the distressed animal. This, however cruel, was necessary; as, had the Pamparo, which was impending, burst upon us here, we should have been irretrievably lost, for the deluge of waters which always accompanies these tornados, or hurricanes, would have changed our bog or marsh, which was a corner of the great Laguna-Ybera, into a lake.

At length, in spite of goading, the poor brute slipped into a small hole, scrambled and floundered a few steps desperately, and then stuck quite fast in the mire, perfectly exhausted and unable to move. We immediately shifted the mails to the postilion's horse, and were about to proceed; but I pulled up on observing Martinez dismount, draw his long, sharp knife, and walk up to the poor brute who lay perfectly quiet in the mud, his nostrils painfully distended,

breathing heavily about an inch clear of the surface. He was going to kill him. "Martinez, Martinez, you infernal, cruel, cowardly blackguard!" roared I, "what are you about? stop!" Martinez paused and looked up at me with astonishment, drawing the sharp, keen blade through his fingers, with that excessive gusto which only a Gaucho feels, when going to commit an act of butchery. "*No muerte, no muerte,* you blood-thirsty Spaniard! Give the poor brute a chance for his life."* Although Martinez knew not a word of English, he interpreted my meaning in an instant, particularly as to enforce it, I had levelled my double gun at his head, of which all the Spaniards I ever met out here have the greatest horror and detestation.

Less than an hour's more painful labour, took us clear of this horrible place. Half-a-mile further on we came to a deep and rapid

* I was so much interested about this animal, from his piteous countenance when Martinez was going to stab him, that I subsequently enquired what became of him, and found that three days afterwards he rejoined his own herd in the coral.

current, two hundred yards wide, and, as the next part was more than a mile from the opposite bank, we were obliged to cross, horses and all. The only means of conveyance was the trunk of a tree slightly hollowed, a mere apology for a canoe, with one small paddle. How they would manage to get this lumbering float across without being carried down by the stream, puzzled me extremely; so I struck a light for a cigar, and watched the proceedings of my two active and intelligent men, pretending to know all about it; though really, getting a lesson in seamanship, from two uneducated Gauchos. They commenced by divesting the horses of their harness, and putting it and the mails into the rude canoe; they then brought three horses on the lee side, and two on the other, or weather side, with a lasso round each of their necks. At their desire I then stepped in and sat down on the mails looking very wise. The horses were urged into the water, and, the moment they were out of their depth, began to tow us over at a rapid rate; the loosing or hauling in of the different lassos from different parts of the boat,

directed the course as well as if we had been steered by a rudder. On landing, we re-harnessed and proceeded, and in a few minutes reached the last post-house.

The moment the people knew we were a government Chasque, there was a great hubbub in the place. A little boy of seven years old, was helped up on a great, tall black steed (his father's) and sent off full speed to drive in the horses. He was such a diminutive little wretch, that I did not think he could possibly cling on. Just as he was starting, his mother called him back, and, to my horror, put into his arms a baby, not a year old. This made no difference to him; he placed the chuckling little red devil sideways before him, jerked his tiny heels into his horse's side, and away the juvenile riders went at a full and reckless gallop, both as naked as they were born. In a few minutes, they returned with great exultation, driving in about a hundred horses; the little baby crowed with delight.

As this was the last post to Corrientes, we reserved our horses until we got within a

league of the city; and then, holding up our heads with great importance, we put the best leg foremost, and rattled along at full speed. On approaching the town, we could perceive that we created quite a sensation. The outposts of cavalry turned out, not knowing what the deuce could be sweeping along at such a break-neck pace; and, as we passed them, Martinez vociferated something in Spanish, the only words of which I could understand were "*Inglaterra*" and "*Chasque.*" The news flew like wildfire, and the whole population and soldiery collected and mobbed us, eagerly enquiring what could bring a Chasque from England.

The greater part of my ride this day had been over slightly elevated table-land, covered with long, rank herbage, which the drought and summer heat had parched in an extraordinary manner. Whenever the land undulated, or approached water, trees became plentiful; and in decided valleys the soil was apparently of the richest and most fertile nature. Frequently, in the midst of the dried-up herbage, clusters of

scarlet verbena, gratefully refreshed the eye; and almost every estancia had a clump of orange trees, at that time filled with the ripening fruit.

It is asserted at Corrientes, that, owing to the great distance of this place from the sea, the climate assimilates to the tropics on sea-board; and that almost all tropical productions, as well as those of Europe, thrive well here. In corroboration of this opinion, I observed several of the family of Cacti which I had hitherto considered confined to a tropical region. One in particular astonished me so much, that though extremely anxious to execute my orders with dispatch, I could not restrain my curiosity, or help pulling up for a brief space, to examine so gigantic a production of nature. The cactus in question grew near the banks of a small rivulet; its trunk was at least eighteen inches in diameter, and rose to the height of twenty feet before it began to throw out any branches; several stems, (about a dozen,) then grew upwards at least thirty feet more. These stems inclined towards a very large tree standing close to

them, as if imploring support and protection.

The cattle with which this country swarms to an enormous extent, are all-in-all to the people who do not live in towns, similar to the reindeer to the Laplanders. Possessing a soil that, without labour, will produce almost anything, they have literally nothing but beef, though the river swarms with fish, and the woods with game. Still, beef is their only present care; and this they use with the most reckless and wasteful extravagance; the consequence is an immense surplus of hides, which I positively assert are now lying by, or rotting in millions. This decay and destruction of profitable merchandize will continue until the river is opened.

I will mention a few of the uses to which I have seen hides applied. The hammocks in which the people sleep, were hides cut, like a puzzle, to spread out as so much net-work, neat, cool, and pleasant. The milk from cows was collected and emptied into a hide spread out on sticks in the shape of a large bucket or tub, capable of holding from sixteen to twenty gallons. The houses

and carts were covered with hides; a hide-spout conveyed water off roofs. The tan-pits were hides spread out like the milk tub before mentioned, containing other hides under tanning process. Every thing connected with horse furniture was supplied by hides. The beams and supports of houses were lashed by hide thongs. The doors and windows, and, frequently, the very walls, were hides laced together; in short, every thing almost was hides.

If we only look forward to the time when these countries shall be securely opened to the enterprize and perseverance of the Anglo-Saxon race—when the enormous capabilities of this region can be developed by the capital which must naturally follow the path that enterprize discovers—then, indeed, shall we see with astonishment the prodigious fortunes that will be made by the enterprizing, and the boundless wealth that will fall, as by the stroke of a magician's wand, upon these, at present, comparatively poverty-stricken, but really when the above period arrives, excessively wealthy, people. Is it not a singular position to be in?

When changing horses, the people kept aloof from my fire-arms, but examined the padlock of my carpet-bag with great attention and curiosity. They were never intrusive, but always extremely courteous.

It was with some difficulty I could manage, after being conducted in form to the President, Don Juan Madariaga, to find my way to our chief, Sir Charles Hotham, and deliver up the mails under my charge. I must confess I was not sorry to dismount and refresh myself with a bath, and then partake of Sir Charles Hotham's hospitality. I arrived exactly at five o'clock in the afternoon, having ridden certainly upwards of eighty miles since day-break, and, to my own astonishment, without any great degree of fatigue; at least I was perfectly ready, willing, and able, to ride back the following morning.

On the mail bag being opened, the letters and despatches were found to be in a most lamentable state, some being bruised and torn, so as hardly to be legible. As the process of deciphering them was carried on after dinner by Sir Charles Hotham with great

interest, I sat down on a stool, went fast asleep, and slid off on the floor, where I lay snoring, *malgre* all discipline or etiquette, in presence of our chief and some members of the Corrientino Government, who had come to hear the news. When roused a short time after, I could not, for the life of me, remember where I was; all sorts of strange fancies flashed through my brain, and I hurriedly felt for my pistols. The company smiled at my disturbed and incoherent movements, and told me tea was waiting.

As Sir Charles and the officers here had not received the least intelligence from England for three months, it can easily be imagined that almost every thing I uttered was news indeed to them all, which they were very eager to hear. I was informed that the Corrientinoes were extremely flattered and delighted at the chasque from England; particularly as I brought up letters only sixty-eight days from our country, the usual passage from Monte Video alone occupying much more time than that. They were quite astonished at such speed, and anticipated great pleasure in the arrival

of the Alecto, which our chief had determined to order up. After telling all the news I could remember, (and it is really astonishing how little one *can* remember in such cases, but how gradually it all leaks out in conversation), I was not sorry to tumble into bed, where, I need not mention, I slept like a top.

CHAPTER VIII.

Port of Corrientes—Appearance of Town—Wretched Market—Departure in Gig—Singular Fly—Drum Fish—Land on Islet—The Foot-prints on the Sand—Departure and Conflagration—Ominous banks of Clouds—Beauty of Scene—Sudden Changes—Tortuosity of Channels—Intense Darkness—Day-light Breaks—Precursor of Pamparo—Ominous Calm—Arrival and Safety of Boat—Precaution against Mosquitoes—The Vessel ascends—Depth of Water, one thousand miles from the Sea—Population swarm on Board—Paraguayan Envoys—The canny Scot—The black stones ignited.

SATURDAY, February 21st, 1846. It was decided, after breakfast, that I should return by the river to the Alecto, in the gig of the Obligado; but, as several preparations were necessary, including despatches, I was unable to get away until the afternoon. I therefore took this opportunity to examine the

town situated on a low sandy barranca, past which the current runs with extreme rapidity and great depth of water. So steep, too, is the bank, that vessels may be hauled alongside the cliff with perfect ease and safety; loading or unloading may consequently be completed with the greatest facility.

The town is irregularly laid out in squares, according to the plan invariably adopted by the council of the Indies of old Spain. It has, however, a ruinous and wretched appearance; and the streets being built on a sandy soil, without any pavement, except before the doors of the principal houses, the forlorn effect is increased. I observed an ancient building (a chapel) erected by the Jesuits two hundred and twenty-two years ago. With great good sense, had the site for a city been chosen, as it certainly is the most convenient place for purposes of traffic in the vicinity of the confluence of the rivers Parana and Paraguay.

I enjoyed a two hours' cruize in the streets, and took a thorough survey of every object of curiosity, not forgetting the market,

which much disappointed me, as literally nothing was there but dirty and hacked bodies of bullocks, a very few fowls, (about two or three dozen,) a few water melons, and other gourds. This disappointed me extremely, as I had anticipated great pleasure in surveying the metropolitan market of so splendid and prolific a country.

At half-past twelve, I went on board the Obligado, and was received with great hospitality and kindness by the officers. After an abundant dinner, having received my despatches and orders, I shoved off in the gig, with three marines and a sailor, four of as good and well behaved men as an officer would wish to command. An old Corrientino pilot also accompanied us for the purpose of bringing up the Alecto; but I perceived, before two hours had passed, that he was not fit or able to navigate a boat, much less a steamer of eight hundred tons, and two hundred horse power. On getting into the stream, we hoisted sail to a light air from the westward. The deep water carried us down close to the Guaranis or Indian shore, the people of which were, at that time, at

war with Corrientes. We were, therefore, obliged to keep a sharp look-out, as these savages not only give no quarter, but torture their prisoners. Every preparation was therefore made to give them a warm reception should they attempt to meddle with us.

The pamparo we had so long been expecting still held off most unaccountably; and although we did not feel such oppression as we had experienced the day previously on shore, still it was excessively hot and close.

As I still felt some remains of fatigue from the previous day's work, I rigged the awning up, and, desiring the coxswain to call me should any change of weather, or hostile demonstration occur, stretched myself out in the bottom of the boat, and was speedily in a profound slumber. After a time I awoke, not at the moment conscious of the cause. The first thing I observed was a number of small spots of blood on the back of my hand. Not feeling any pain, I lay still looking at it, and wondering at the cause. I was speedily satisfied by perceiving a kind of half beetle, half fly, settle upon it, puncture an almost invisible hole with its claws, shaped

exactly like those of a crab, and then feed itself from the spot of blood which exuded. After amusing myself by watching the miniature vampire, I pocketed my hands, to avoid any more blood-sucking, and lay back, trying to sleep again. I had lain a few minutes, half asleep, when I was once more roused by a noise on the planks of the boat's bottom. This caused me to prick up my ears. After a short interval, the noise was repeated; but, this time, louder than before, vibrating through the whole boat. At sunset it ceased.

A few days after, when coming up with the Alecto, in exactly the same spot, I heard precisely the same kind of noise under the ship's bottom. On consulting some of the most intelligent bacchianos, I was informed that it was caused by a peculiar fish which, in this part of the river, fastens to the bottom of any floating substance. None of the men could account for it, but they all agreed as to its accuracy, and called it the drum fish. I have read of such a fish in the Eastern seas, otherwise I should not like to mention it.

All the afternoon, the light air and strong current carried us rapidly down. Just before the sun dipped, I determined to land, to enable the men to boil their Paraguay tea, which for some time had been served out to them in lieu of the Chinese herb. Seeing a very small island, not more than two hundred yards long, and one hundred wide, rather more elevated than usual, and consequently dry, I settled in my own mind that it was just the place in which to boil our pot, as, on account of its diminutive size, very little danger could be apprehended from tigers. We accordingly pulled in, landed, speedily lit our fire, and put on the pot.

Whilst this was boiling, I sauntered along with my gun, taking one man with me. I had got scarcely fifty yards from the boat, before a wild turkey rose with prodigious clatter. He had, however, hardly risen ten feet above the long grass, when down he came to the sound of my right barrel. He was immediately picked up by my attendant, and we walked to the river to deposit him there. We happened to come out on a little tiny piece of sand, hardly larger than a sheet

of paper, but upon this small space were the fresh foot-prints of two different sized tigers. "Oh, oh!" said I. "It is impossible your worships can be more than two hundred yards off, and that's too close for me: Besides, your domain is so deuced small, that no doubt you must be hungry." By this time the Paraguay tea was ready, and it was instantly lifted into the gig; but we were loathe to depart without leaving a memento of our good-will. Instead, therefore, of allowing the burning embers to smoulder out on the sand, we spread them all along the dry grass: the combustion flew like wildfire, and in two minutes the flames were crackling and rattling like musquetry, enveloping the whole islet in a wrapper of fire and smoke. Hoping by this means to force the wild beasts to take the water, we ran down close along the shore, as near as the heat would allow, with guns cocked and every thing prepared, but without success, as they must have escaped on the other side of the islet. The boat's crew, quaintly called this place "Turkey-singe Tiger island."

As the sun set, the light cat's-paws which

had hitherto occasionally filled our sails died away, and we had to rely upon our oars, pulling for two hours, then laying them in for rest and refreshment. Towards the south-west a large collection of slate-coloured clouds, as well defined and apparently as substantial as mountains at a distance, were perceived. The opposite side of the horizon was without a speck, and the whole surface of the water was covered with the miasma or haze before-mentioned.

It is as impossible to describe, as to forget, the beauty of that night, or the extraordinary and sudden changes that came over us as we rapidly swept down the perpetual current. The water being like a looking-glass, we appeared to fly through it as if through air. We soon found ourselves in the broad open stream, gliding rapidly past high barrancas. The most intense and painful silence, rarely broken by the distant lowing of cattle or neighing of horses, prevailed. Suddenly, as we shot in between islands, the scene entirely changed. The channel was narrowed, and the hum and buzz of insects and lizards were so loud that a strange contrast ensued to the

previous silence. Now and then were heard the snorting of the carpincho, as he splashed off the bank into the river, and the howl of some wild beast, wandering in search of prey. When the channel narrowed, fire-flies flitted through the trees in countless numbers, illuminating the thick foliage

"Like golden lamps in a green night."*

Onward we went; not a soul was inclined to sleep; once or twice we shot into such narrow channels, that the branches of trees met over our heads, totally excluding the lunar light, and causing intervals of pitchy darkness. Several times I was astonished to find the boat's head towards the moon, and a few minutes after, in a contrary direction. This was produced by the tortuosity of the channels. But the constant and swift current, which carried us so silently and rapidly along, assured me that we were pursuing the right direction.

After midnight the moon set. Masses of clouds suddenly covered the sky, and every thing portended the approach of the long-

* Andrew Marvell's "Bermudas."

delayed and dreaded pamparo. The darkness was now so dense that we lay the oars in, afraid, if too much way was given the boat, that a snag or stump might send us to the bottom without warning. I thought it likely that the north-east wind, which generally blows two hours before the fury of the pamparo breaks, would give us timely notice to land in a sheltered position. The gig was allowed, therefore, to drift on. Not knowing exactly the strength of the current in the confined and rapid passages we had come through, I was very doubtful about my reckoning, but calculated, at any rate, that I should not, at day-light, be within twenty miles of the ship. It would have been a most serious thing to us, had we inadvertently passed her in the dark; as without provisions, our return would be almost impossible, to say nothing of the lubberly nature of such a mishap.

Having no watch, I could not ascertain the hour. I was therefore much annoyed at feeling a light air from the north-east. "Here it comes!" thought I; "and by Jove! if day-light does not arrive soon, we are done for, as

the south-west, or opposite gale, will come on before we can get sufficient sail on the boat to reach the vessel."

As the breeze freshened, however, a streak of grey was faintly discernible in the east, which gradually became broader and stronger. When there was light enough to see our way, we made sail, setting both lugs and booming them out to catch the favourable wind. Very soon the swelling of sails and bending of masts proved the increasing breeze, and rendered it necessary to take in the main lug. "Hold on, good sail and spar!" were our thoughts, as the rapidly increasing gale made every thing crack again. As if anxious to get to the vessel, the boat rushed foaming through the water at a dangerous speed. The heights of Bellia Vista were quickly visible: we approached them with flying velocity; and immediately after, the Alecto was perceived snugly at anchor in middle of the stream, afloat and all a'taunto.

When within about a mile, the lug sail, which had been so violently distended, suddenly flapped against the mast. It was almost a dead heat between me and the Pam-

paro. "Now, my boys, out oars for your lives, if you want to reach her to-day. Never mind the sail; bundle it down any where. Give way like bricks." My jolly marines and coxswain did, indeed, give way, and, in a very brief space, we were alongside the steamer. Fortunately, Captain Austen had perceived us, and being aware of the impending gale, had made every preparation to hoist us in. The yard and stay tackles were therefore already overhauled down. "Hurrah, lads, hook her on," was the order.

At this moment, the dense black clouds had lowered over the Alecto like a shroud; small, forked lightning had already begun to play round the clouds which had just commenced the eccentric rotatory motion before described. A shrill pipe was heard, accompanied by a measured tramping of men. The boat seemed to rise out of the water, and gradually deposit herself in the bosom of the Alecto. The whole force of the Pamparo, which appeared to have reserved itself, now burst upon us with tremendous fury, accompanied by thunder, lightning, driving rain, and darkness.

"Well, you have just nicked it in time, my boy," said the old master as I descended into the gun-room. "I have been watching you. You had a tough race with Pamparo: hark at it now! It is blowing a hurricane: how very dark it is! Now then, let us hear your yarn about the chasque."

We were speedily engaged in discussing a breakfast, which few, if any, places in the world could supply at so cheap a rate as the Parana. It was all the produce of the sportman's efforts.

As we arrived on board the Alecto at a little past seven o'clock on Sunday morning, it follows that we were hardly eighteen hours coming upwards of a hundred and twenty miles. The wind had helped the boat only for the last two hours, and during the darkest part of the night we had been merely drifting. All this must give a good idea of the strength of the current. I was informed that the vessel had been rescued from her unpleasant position on shore at twelve o'clock on Friday night; but most strenuous means were required; and, had it not been for the powerful assistance of the forty men of the Fanny,

and the brig herself in laying out bower anchors, she would not have been off even then.

After breakfast, I was glad to go to bed, where I slept soundly until the afternoon. In the mean time, the Pamparo had blown itself out, and the vessel had moved on considerably; but coming to a bad and dangerous passage, had again anchored for the night.

Monday. Proceeded as usual; but so much sounding and caution were necessary that we achieved only twenty-five miles.

Tuesday. We were delayed this morning by a dense fog: about half-past six, the men were busily engaged on their knees holystoning the decks, when a slight shower fell. This produced a perfect cloud of the largest sized and most venomous mosquitoes which instantly filled every corner and cranny of the vessel. The men were so dreadfully stung that they were compelled to suspend their work, and use their hands to flap off the insects from the exposed parts of their bodies. Their bites were so poisonous, that an officer and three men were put on the sick list the same day. The cabins, and holds, and engine room were like the mouth of a

bee-hive, when the bees are in the act of swarming: every one rushed on deck to escape in some measure from the painful plague.

To enable us to go below to our breakfast, we were obliged to put our feet and legs into a bread bag, which was then drawn up and tied with a rope-yarn round our waists. Even this precaution was not entirely successful; and, the moment a hurried breakfast was despatched, every person sought a part of the vessel most exposed to the wind, as, in this situation, the torment was diminished. About nine o'clock the fog gradually cleared away; and, with it, declined the horrible pest. At eleven o'clock we were rapidly ascending the river with very few, if any, mosquitoes left.

Wednesday. The whole of this day we were labouring upwards; and as the brig Fanny was still alongside, could not expect to advance so quickly as if unencumbered. Towards the afternoon, the city of Corrientes was perceived at a distance. On approaching it, all the heights were crowded with the population on horseback anxious to behold the long talked of vessel, which against wind and

current, could force herself so many hundred miles up the river. We were informed by the best authority that, until the inhabitants actually beheld a steamer, they were very doubtful of the existence of such vessels, and considered the wonderful stories they had heard, as mere exaggeration. At any rate, the steamer's comparatively swift approach, although encumbered by the brig, caused interest and pleasurable excitement; and it was extremely amusing to us on board to observe the gestures of admiration as, gradually breasting the rapidly-running current, we drew alongside and saluted the multitude, who then accompanied us towards the city. We gradually advanced, until we arrived within thirty yards of the custom-house, when the whole town was opened to our view, and showed us every house-top and vacant place literally crammed with the population, whose loud hum of wonder was distinctly audible through the vessel. Soon after, we anchored in seventeen fathoms, being the only English man of war that had ever been to Corrientes, nearly one thousand miles from the sea.

In my various walks and rides through

these countries I was much struck with a curious circumstance; to wit, that nearly all the women, and most of the men, were afflicted with a wen in the neck resembling the goitre in the Alps. There is little or no doubt that the Parana derives its principal supply of water from the melting of snow in the Andes. The opinion that snow water is the cause of this disease in the Alpine region, seems to be confirmed by its prevalence in this part of South America, although here a wide and marked difference in soil, climate, and modes of life, are evident.

As soon as the heat of the day had passed, the people began to swarm on board, and speedily the whole vessel was thronged. Their gratification was much heightened by small glasses of cherry brandy in the gun-room, which liquor being totally unknown to them, was much sought after and highly appreciated. I must confess I was rather disappointed with the ladies; but of course, such a totally different style of beauty to that we had been accustomed to, could hardly at first sight be admired. As our fair visitors

wore no stays, they had a *loose* appearance, which took off wonderfully from that harmony of *tournure* so essentially necessary to please an Englishman who is accustomed at home to see beauty in its finest form.

It was announced to us that the envoys from Paraguay were going to take a passage in the Alecto to Monte Video, and had made known their desire to visit the vessel previously. Every preparation was therefore made to receive them with due honour.

Friday.—The decks being nicely cleared, about eleven o'clock, and every thing in order, the envoys made their appearance. Like our other visitors, they were extremely delighted with the steamer, and with every thing in her. They could not comprehend how we could afford to live in such luxury as our mess evinced, which, although only the common run of gun-room appointments in H. M. navy, was very far superior to any thing they had ever seen, or even dreamt of. Their simplicity amused us much; but their kind and amiable manners instantly gained the good-will of every person in the vessel.

Amongst many other questions, they anxiously enquired what was the use of our immense telescopes, for which they mistook our rocket tubes. When we explained what these were, the envoys remained still in the dark, not being able to conceive how such a great heavy thing as a rocket could project itself. When writing to their friends in Paraguay, they were also puzzled for a simile in attempting to describe the steamer and the revolving paddle wheels. The only image which offered itself was a comparison to hot water carts, and so they designated us.

The Paraguayans soon left us, and I immediately donned my straw hat, and landed in search of amusement. Wherever I bent my steps in the town, the greatest civility and attention were shown; and I was frequently invited into houses, and regaled with matte* and cigars. The cigar was always lighted, and a few whiffs drawn by the lady of the house, which is here considered the

* Matte is the vernacular for Paraguay tea.

height of politeness. The only drawback I felt was my lamentable ignorance of the language, which prevented my getting accurate information on many points in which I felt extreme interest. As I passed a very substantial house, a short distance out of the town, a grim-looking senor touched his sombrero to me, and said, "Good morning, sir." "Why, you are a Scotchman," said I. "Yes, I am," replied he. "Will you walk into my poor abode?" I did this willingly, and entered into conversation with him. He told me that his name was Thomas Paul, and that he had been at Corrientes forty years. I suspect he was formerly in Whitelock's army. Whatever he may have been, he is now a shrewd old chap, very civil, and, anxious to converse with a countryman. He offered me a horse whenever I chose, and, during our stay, I frequently took advantage of his politeness.

From him I learned much about the country. He acknowledged that, as a currier, he had saved a good deal of money; but I could not fish out how he had invested

it; certainly not in any local security, as he had too much Scotch caution to lend it on such precarious responsibility; and as I discovered that he had no communication with any other place, I shrewdly suspect he had hoarded his treasure in some spot known only to himself.

"I have often heard of a steamer," said he, "but never expected to see one up here; I always looked forward with great interest to be gratified by this sight, when I got back to the auld country."

Like all British settlers, old Paul doubtlessly intended to return some day, though, poor fellow, quite oblivious of his age and enormous distance from home.

"May I beg a favour?" said he.

"Oh certainly," replied I, "a dozen if you like."

"The fact is, I have often told my men that in my country they burn black stones. The Ladrones, although they know I never lie, will not believe me; and you will confer a great favour if you will give me a piece of coal the size of a walnut."

"If that is all your request, it is easily done," said I; and seeing the Dingy pulling past, I hailed her: "Dingy there, go on board and ask the chief engineer to send me a bucket of coals immediately."

Whilst the little boat was absent, my friend, Thomas Paul, or, as he was called by the inhabitants, Don Thomaso Paulo, collected all his people, and told them that he was going to prove his former assertion of the black stones' burning. This completely put a stop to all work; the men lit their cigarettes, and composed themselves in that lazy manner which is peculiar to people of Spanish descent.

In a few minutes the boat returned with the coal, and as, for the credit of my friend, I wished to make a sensation, I undertook the formation of the fire myself, and carefully prepared a little pile of wood and coal. It was speedily lighted. The workmen looked on with great curiosity. For some time the wood burnt in vain; the coal would not kindle; a smile of contempt passed over the faces of the men, as they looked at one an-

other significantly. At length, as the wood burnt up, the coals began slowly to ignite, and, after a short time, commenced blazing furiously.

"Caramba!" was repeated frequently by the men, who looked on intently until the whole mass was consumed. The Scotch Don meantime watched the effect with a triumphant smile.

I then engaged him to dine with me the following day, and returned on board.

CHAPTER IX.

Paraguayans' Baggage—Corrientino Blacksmith—Preparation to make Obligado fast alongside—The Obligado adrift—Get alongside the Alecto—News in a Paper twenty years old—The Alecto crowded with Fashion—Value of Stock—The Lioness—The Vulture—The Alecto starts on her downward Passage—Delight of the Multitude—Headlong Speed—The Parana better known in London than in Buenos Ayres—Protection from night Damp—Fluctuations of Climate—Hard work for Seamen—Sickness—Jack kissing the Tiger—The Alecto's quick and easy Steerage.

SATURDAY.—Early this morning we commenced embarking the baggage of the Paraguayan envoys; and a curious collection of articles it comprised. Many, of native manu-

facture, were highly creditable to a country so completely shut out from the world. Towards evening, we had another assemblage of Corrientinos, who were never tired of examining the steamer. In common with others, the chief blacksmith, or engineer of government, was amazingly struck with the machinery; but afterwards observed he thought he should be able to make an engine equally good. As he had so good an idea of his own abilities, it was proposed to him to weld our quarter davit, which had been cut in two by a shot at Tonnellero. This job he undertook with great alacrity and confidence; but without any result. All the government engineers put together could not repair the damage, and the davit was sent back dreadfully bruised and mauled after a few days.

As it was determined to start on our return as soon as possible, I was ordered to fetch the prize schooner, Obligado, alongside. This was a difficult job, as it was a dead calm, and the vessel lay about five hundred yards down the river, in very deep water. Moreover, she had no windlass. I was

obliged therefore to join three long hawsers together, and then lay them out from the steamer. Our boats being extremely small, and the weight of ropes very great, it was with much difficulty I effected my purpose. At length, having secured the hawser, I commenced heaving the anchor up; but she had been so long stationary, and in such deep water (twenty fathoms) that without the usual purchase of a windlass, it was hard work indeed. We, however, speedily rigged a deck tackle with two purchase-blocks, and commenced our work. After an hour's hard labour we weighed the anchor, and had just succeeded in getting it in sight, when the hawser, no longer able to bear the weight of a vessel of ninety tons, and tremendous drag of current, parted about a hundred fathoms from the Alecto, and the schooner was adrift. To add to our unpleasant situation, the anchor (our only one) was hopelessly foul. This was, indeed, a nice situation, adrift in the middle of the stream, unable to anchor, a dead calm, and upwards of two hundred fathoms of hawser

dragging astern. To cut this away would have been inexcusable, as hawsers were very scarce, and impossible to be replaced. Fortunately, however, having forty men on board, we immediately attempted to haul it in: but in the meantime we had drifted completely out of sight of the vessel, and were still rapidly going down. To guide the schooner was impossible, and, with all our exertions, we had the mortification, in a bend of the river, to run ashore.

This was an awkward and unpleasant position. But like some other apparent misfortunes, it was the means of rescuing us from our difficulties. The rocks against which the schooner struck, were perpendicular; she went broadside on, remained stationary for a moment, and was just swinging off again from the pressure of water in bight of hawser, when an idea struck me of lashing her to the rock. Her head had swung off slightly, and in another moment she would have been again adrift A dozen active fellows sprang on shore from her stern, and hastily fastened a strong rope round a projecting part of the rock. The

current, like a mill-dam, took hold of her bow, and round she swung at a fearful rate.

"Hold on, good rope, or we are again adrift," were our thoughts, as the whole strain of the vessel, and still-dragging hawser, came upon it. To our great satisfaction it stood the strain, and in a few minutes more the schooner was firmly lashed to the lucky or unlucky rocks. The anchor was immediately cleared, and prepared to let go, and then all our force was put upon the author of our misfortunes, the faithless hawser.

In spite of the exertions of so many stout fellows, it was impossible to get an inch of it in by hand; the deck-tackle was therefore again applied. This powerful purchase at last succeeded; and in about an hour we had the whole length snugly coiled away in different parts of the deck. Luckily a breeze now sprung up; sail was immediately made, and we began slowly to breast the stream on our return to the vessel. The breeze freshened, and we soon arrived alongside the Alecto, where, instead of any condolence, we got

unmercifully quizzed, and laughed at for our mishap. In the afternoon, we loaded the Fanny with bullocks, and took a good supply on the Alecto's decks.

My friend, Don Thomaso Paulo, dined with us in the gun-room to-day, and was quite astonished at our splendour.

"Never did I see the like before," said he. "Prodigious! What will the people here think of it?"

To return our hospitality, he brought a canoe-load of turkeys and stock, and several bags of oranges. After dinner, as he was sipping his claret, he said, "I have one more favour to ask, gentlemen; I hope you won't think it too much."

"Well, what is it?"

"Can you spare me an English paper?"

"Of course we can."

"I should not like to deprive you of a late one. If it is twenty years' old, it will be news to me."

The old man's delight was unbounded when we gave him *The Times* of the 10th of November, 1845.

"Really, gentlemen, I can hardly believe in my own good luck, or in your liberality;" said he, as he folded up the paper carefully. "What enjoyment is in store! I shall read it again and again; it will last me the rest of my life."

To-day, being a holiday, every person in Corrientes came off, in the cool of the evening, dressed in their best. Amongst the number, were the President of the Republic, Don Madariaga, the different ministers, and the wife, mother, and children of General Paz, then in command of the allied Paraguayan and Corrientine army. The vessel was literally crammed; engine-room, cabins, paddle-boxes, and, in fact, every place capable of holding a human being. I have no doubt this visit to the Alecto will prove, politically, of advantage to us, as it gave the Corrientinos a slight idea of the wealth and power of England; of the admirable adaptation of the vessel, both for war and comfort, and of the order and regularity observed in the English navy.

From the crowd of rank and fashion, I

had a good opportunity of observing the costumes. The limited intercourse between this part of South America and other lands has, of late years, degenerated to almost entire seclusion. It would, therefore, be unreasonable to expect the inhabitants could procure dresses of equal beauty to those of more favoured nations. But the country manufactures of which the garments were principally formed, though comparatively coarse, were very elaborately worked by hand, and, consequently, infinitely dearer than female attire of the same quality in Europe. For example, a small coarse towel, or napkin, embroidered or worked all round by hand, was worth a doubloon, or ounce of gold, equal, nearly, to four pounds sterling.

The natural productions of the country, such as horned cattle, horses, and sheep, are, of course, from their immense numbers, proportionably cheap. The usual price, near the capital, in peaceable times being, for horses, from three shillings and sixpence to fifteen shillings, according to their quality; and horned cattle averaging about ten shil-

lings. This price, however, varies in different parts of the province. In many places, beasts have only a nominal value; sheep and hogs, sold in large numbers, fetch from sixpence to one shilling each. At this time, however, on account of the war, prices have risen wonderfully hereabouts. Horses are much in demand, and vary from twelve shillings to one pound ten, and other stock in proportion, except sheep and pigs, which are totally neglected, and uncared for at all times, and by all parties.

As, hereafter, I shall have to state some calculations made in another part of the province, which may differ materially from this, I think it as well to call attention to the great variation which even the distance of fifty miles will make in prices during hostilities.

In the evening, the last instalment of the envoy's luggage arrived, including a lioness and a curious vulture. The lioness immediately became the pet of the men, and was allowed to run about the deck like a huge cat.

The vulture was of a rare species, and as I have searched several works in vain for

any description of it, I venture to make one here.

It stands about twenty inches high; its back and breast are cream-coloured, and the lower half of its wings black; the feathers round its neck form a kind of ruff or boa, similar to the finest sable fur. All over the head, a great variety of colours, so beautifully blended that, although there are fifteen different tints, they all look harmonious. Unlike vultures in general, the present bird is extremely elegant and cleanly, and even haughty in appearance. The principal Paraguayan afterwards informed me that it was called the king of the vultures, and was extremely savage and bold, always flying at the eyes of its prey, which caused it to be much dreaded.*

* Since his return to England, the author saw a specimen of this bird in the Zoological Gardens, Regent's Park. Change of climate had altered its appearance. In lieu of the haughty spirit which characterised the vulture he had seen in its native land, the captive bird, evidently pining and dejected, had lost its beauty, no less than its fierceness.

Sunday.—At eight A. M. the steam was up, and every preparation made to weigh. The Fanny was lashed alongside, and the Obligado fast astern by a hawser. A considerable delay now took place from the ceremonious leave-taking between the Corrientine and Paraguayan ministers. The whole town had likewise turned out to see the departure; the ladies in smart dresses, and waving their handkerchiefs, added to the gaiety and picturesque appearance of this (for South America) vast and motley crowd. On the elevated parts, crowds of horsemen were careering about, some with their ponchos streaming behind them, and others as naked as they were born, urging their bare-backed horses to and fro. At length the tedious ceremony was over, and the ministers took leave.

The moment they left the ship, the cable began slowly to come into the hawse holes. The loud clanking of the huge windlass-pawles attracted the attention of the multitude. Just as this was becoming familiar to them, the spare steam, rapidly

rising for use, began to rush out of the waste pipe with increasing violence and uproar, until its force appeared to them to be more than the vessel could contain. The assemblage was struck with awe, and a death-like stillness prevailed. At length the huge anchor came slowly up to the bows, and the paddles being put in motion, the vessel, under the able pilotage of Captain Sulivan, slowly moved up the river and disappeared round a point from the view of the crowd. This upward course was taken to enable the vessel to turn round in a wider channel, a few hundred yards above. Full power was now put on, and, with the Fanny alongside, and the Obligado astern, she tore down the torrent-like current, and shot round the point with almost the speed of a rocket, once again, and for the last time, in full view of our friends. So sudden and unexpected a re-appearance of the Alecto came upon them by surprise. With one accord they raised a scream of pleasure, which continued, as we flew past them, for about two minutes, when another point shut us out

from Corrientes, and we were once more in a perfect desert.

As the difficulty in ascending the river has been sufficiently explained, it will easily be imagined that the danger was aggravated a thousand times in going down with so rapid a current. A thorough seaman may, from constant practice, have nerves of iron; but it is indeed awful to find several vessels, thus in a body, propelled by the full power of mighty steam, in combination with a rapid current, tearing down a river at almost railway speed. Although not on duty, I could not leave the deck, being fascinated by the velocity with which we were threading narrow and tortuous passages. Sometimes, when the channel ran close to an island, the whirl of trees as the vessels appeared to fly past and the branches brush the paddle-boxes, made me giddy.

"If we were only to touch the bottom at this pace," thought I, "what would become of the Alecto. I don't believe the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty would give

much for her safety now, if they had a bird's-eye view of her."

All this time, the usual routine of the vessel was carried on as if nothing uncommon was going forward. Of course, to descend at this apparently reckless pace with safety, it was necessary to have a first-rate pilot. There was only one person in South America who had either the nerve, knowledge, or ability to do it. It is natural to suppose that this person must have been a native of the country, brought up on the river, and who had spent a long and active life in getting such a thorough and precise knowledge. With pride do I say it, this was not the case. The pilot was a brother officer, Captain B. J. Sulivan, who coolly stood on the paddle-box, and conned the vessel by a motion of his hand to the quarter-master. The whole of the river, up to Corrientes, is now surveyed by the above-mentioned officer, and better known, by his means, in London, than at Rosas' capital, Buenos Ayres.

For several miles, as we ran down, we observed a great change in the large timber trees

growing on the banks. Ten days previously, when steaming up, they had a very dark green tropical appearance. Now, all their tops were covered with a profusion of bright golden flowers exactly similar in colour to our laburnum blossoms. This floral and brilliant decoration of huge forest trees saluted the eye with a novel sense of pleasure.

Just before sun-set, we were obliged to anchor close to an island, as a very crooked and dangerous passage was just beyond it. The envoys accommodated themselves, with great cheerfulness and good humour, to the restrictions of a man-of-war. As it was impossible for them to sleep below, their cots were hung on different parts of the upper deck; their only covering from the dew was a blanket spread out between two sticks, just over the mosquito curtain, which was then tucked in under the mattrass, making a very cool and comfortable bed.

At day-light the following morning, we were much amused at the singular appearance of Her Majesty's ship. What with cots, cattle, lioness, vulture, sheep, and various

matters heaped about, she certainly did not look much like a man-of-war.

The dew was so heavy, during the night, that the blankets covering the cots were completely filled with globules of water, but not the slightest damp went through; nearly a quart of water was thus kept off the sleeper's person. No inconvenience, but rather good, was felt from sleeping in this manner; as several officers who practised the method, always fancied they rose in the morning much more refreshed than if they had slept in their cabins below.

Tuesday.—This morning, we started, with the Fanny still shouldered, and the schooner astern. We had to thread another tortuous and narrow passage which crossed the river; and our course was rendered more difficult, from the strong current having a tendency to carry the three vessels out of the channel on to the opposite bank. Moreover, one place had four inches water less than we drew, and this was just in an awkward angle, where it was necessary to give a back-turn, in order

to stop the vessel's way suddenly. At this critical moment, the unfortunate Obligado got into such a position, from want of attention in steerage, that she checked the Alecto round, exactly in the wrong direction. An order was then given which perhaps few, if any, naval officers ever heard before, and which tickled all our fancies amazingly. "Schooner a-hoy! port your helm! run yourselves on shore!—Do you hear? run ashore immediately, bang into the bushes!"

The Obligado's jib-boom instantly disappeared in the long, rank grass, followed by her bowsprit and figure head. She remained stationary until the Alecto and the Fanny had got safely over the difficult parts. The Alecto having anchored, Captain Sulivan returned in a boat to get the schooner off, and bring her through. This was soon done, without much difficulty, after disentangling her bowsprit geer from the long interwoven grass and jungle. Twice more, during the day, we were obliged to anchor by the stern to explore the passes before venturing over them, as the river was evi-

dently falling. In the afternoon, we finally came to off the barrancas, near Goya, and made fast for the night.

Wednesday.—This being the last place where we could expect to land with safety, it was unanimously determined that every person should exert himself to procure as much game as he could. Fifty miles below, we should be in the enemy's country, where it would be impossible to land with safety. Large parties accordingly sallied out each morning, and the slaughter of game was prodigious. The sun, on our shooting excursions, blazed fiercely. A light wind from the north-east not only brings oppressive heat, but also clouds of stinging flies.

Friday.—We again started, leaving the friendly country behind us. As the river, for several days, had been rapidly falling, we found the difficulties of navigation increase in spite of our former experience. Many and many times we were obliged to anchor by the stern, and narrowly examine the passage through which we almost feared we should be unable to pass.

At noon the north-east wind suddenly ceased, giving immediate relief to all, as the oppressive atmosphere was no longer felt. The barometer soon began to fall, assuring us that the southerly—the most welcome and cool breeze—was likely soon to commence. A thick haze covered the whole surface of the river, so much so that we were obliged to anchor for the night, anxiously looking out for the Pamparo that would relieve us all, and make the air pleasant and salubrious.

Saturday.—As the sun rose, the light southerly air we had felt all night, died away, and returned to the north-east, which brought with it the most suffocating heat. The haze continued to hang over every thing, and was so oppressive, that any exertion was impossible. Few could overcome the lassitude. At sun-set, the wind veered round to the south-west again, and we all felt revivified as the delicious coolness animated our worn-out and jaded frames.

Sunday.—Weighed again at day-light, and proceeded. As the river is now getting

more clear of danger, and likewise better known, and deeper, we felt much greater confidence. At ten A.M. a brig was perceived a-head, which, upon nearer approach and signalising, proved to be Her Majesty's ship Philomel. On passing her on our upward passage, nearly a month previously, orders had been left with her to proceed up the river as fast as she could. But, at our present point of meeting, she was only about sixty miles in advance of her former position! This is a pretty good proof of the difficulty of a sailing ship in getting up this river, particularly as she was one of the fastest little vessels in Her Majesty's navy. We desired her to follow us, which was most provoking to her, as she had just got into the south-west, or fair wind for ascending the river.

Just as we passed her, a Partido, or small party of cavalry, were seen on the heights watching us intently. Onward went the Alecto, and, in half-an-hour, poor Philomel was completely lost sight of, being shut in by some of the numerous windings of the

river. Another vessel was soon seen a-head, which speedily proved to be a steamer, and, immediately afterwards, signalled herself as the Gorgon. At two P.M. we swept round her stern, and anchored.

Our crew, a scanty one at the best, was now very much diminished by wounded and sick, the latter being chiefly sufferers from the ulcerous effects of mosquito-bites. Added to these causes of diminution, we were always compelled to have three leadsmen on duty, whose severe labour rendered three relays necessary. The remaining hands were therefore very few, and the work of heaving up the anchor several times a-day, was so arduous, that frequent additions were made to the sick-list. This may be readily imagined, when it is known not only that all hands were on deck from dawn till dusk, but that the excessive toil was performed beneath an almost vertical sun.

As the Fanny and the Obligado were about to be left behind, we received in lieu of them, for assistance in difficulties, a large open boat lent us by the goverment of Cor-

rientes, our boats being totally inadequate to lay out a bower anchor. We acquired another addition here in a large tiger, which had been living some time on board the Gorgon, and had become on terms of perfect familiarity with the men. I have frequently watched their diverting gambols, and seen an honest Jack, in the exuberance of his merriment, take the tiger round the neck, and heartily kiss his great, grim, hairy visage.

A party of marines were here received from the Gorgon, for a passage to the besieged city of Monte Video. This was of great assistance to us, as the services of these fine fellows much relieved our overworked crew.

CHAPTER X.

Cast off the Fanny and Obligado—Urquieza's heavy Guns—Reports of San Lorenzo—Pass San Lorenzo at full speed—Enemy's Preparations—Great bustle in Moncellia's Camp—Steam, versus Horses—Flying Artillery beaten hollow—Alarmed Family of Gauchos—At Sea again—Arrival at Monte Video—Distance steamed—A dangerous mistake—Daily skirmishes at Monte Video—Steam struggling—Re-enter the Parana—Drive Workmen out of the Batteries at Tonnelero—Effect of Wind on Congreve Rockets—A Deserter—Deputation from Schooners—Cool Proposal—The Threat—The Answer.

TUESDAY.—At day-light we again started, and, after several times anchoring to sound, we sighted the Baxada of Santa Fé, at eight o'clock. Soon afterwards, we passed the

Dolphin, at anchor there. Casting off the Fanny and the Obligado, we continued our course, with immensely increased speed. It may be interesting to mention that the Alecto, even when encumbered with the above vessels, answered her helm very nearly as quickly and well as when she was without them; particularly as she had much less steam power than her bulk required. Excepting the Firebrand, she was nevertheless by far the quickest at answering her helm, and, consequently, the handiest steam vessel in the Parana.

As, at the great rate we were going, we might easily have passed San Lorenzo the same night, we made every preparation to engage whatever batteries might have been erected. We had just finished all our preparations when the raking barranca beforementioned, appeared in view. A body of cavalry being on it, we immediately went to quarters, trained every muzzle to return any attack, and waited with some degree of anxiety for the result. Reports had reached us that Urquieza had, with immense labour,

taken some heavy guns, recovered from the schooner Chacabuca, which had been blown up by the Firebrand some months previously; and placed them on this commanding position. As we were extremely light, from having burnt nearly all our coals, we flew round the raking point at a fearful pace, while the enemy's cavalry stared with eyes wide open at our apparently destructive speed.

At three o'clock, we exchanged signals with the Firebrand, whom we had last seen, apparently in action with the batteries of Tonnelero, and, at four, we anchored alongside her. We found that they had not returned the fire of field-pieces, and had one man wounded, who afterwards died. They had heard through deserters, a report that twenty guns were on their journey, by land, from Buenos Ayres to San Lorenzo, and that formidable demonstrations were made on the heights, in the narrowest part of the passage.

In the evening we embarked another party of marines from the Firebrand for

passage to Monte Video. The Paraguayan envoys were as much delighted with this beautiful steamer as they had already been with the Alecto, and seemed much flattered by a novel salute of blue lights from her yard-arms and prominent parts, which had a very splendid appearance in the darkness of the night.

Wednesday.—It was deemed advisable to pass these reported formidable preparations with as little notice of our approach as possible. Consequently the Firebrand and ourselves were under weigh and steaming down, full speed, an hour before dawn. At broad day-light, we found ourselves at the commencement of the barrancas of San Lorenzo, and twenty minutes after got a-breast of their position. Every gun and weapon, of course, levelled, but not a man appeared.

Just after passing, the Firebrand turned round and proceeded up again, leaving us to pursue our course alone. The enemy had chosen his position with considerable judgment, and had thrown up works of great strength and solidity. Only five embrasures

were however finished. Evidently the guns had not arrived. Half an eye could plainly see that if heavy guns were brought to this position, it would be a difficult and dangerous undertaking for any vessels (steamers or otherwise) to go up, as the river, being very much contracted at this point, the current gained additional strength; and, from the height of the barranca, guns could be pointed down so as to sweep completely their decks with round, grape, or musquetry. As the deep water ran close to the cliffs, it was necessary for vessels of deep draught to go very near to them, which made it much more perilous for steamers, as the shot would plump down through the decks; and if, in the part containing the engines or boilers, would infallibly disable them. Had this happened, the current would most certainly have drifted the crippled vessel on shore, and then————

Our observation of this capital position was duly and faithfully reported at headquarters. At eight A. M. we shot past Rosario. The Firebrand had given us informa-

tion that General Moncillia had moved his camp considerably higher up the river than his former position. We were therefore keeping a good look out for it, as we owed him a grudge for peppering us at Tonnelero, and determined, should he show any signs of hostility, to anchor by the stern, out of range of his field-pieces, and pound him with our long thirty-twos and rockets.

At eleven A.M. we passed the village of San Nicholas, and, in about ten minutes, perceived from the mast-head the encampment; but, much to our annoyance, completely out of gun-shot inland. We had come down so silently, and with such speed, that we were not seen until just a-breast of the enemy. The moment the discovery took place, a prodigious hubbub ensued. The whole encampment was in the most violent excitement. Officers galloping about here and there, as if for very life. To do them justice, they worked well and quickly; for, in a very short time, their field-pieces were all taken to pieces, stowed in huge carts, and away they galloped, helter skelter, as

hard as they could urge the horses, to try and intercept us at Tonnelero, the next place we should be obliged to pass within gunshot. Close to the gun-carts, an immense herd of horses, to enable them to change at pleasure, were driven by a cloud of cavalry. All their movements could be noted from the mast heads without a spy-glass, and caused great amusement and merriment in the vessel, as we knew it was perfectly impossible they could reach the place as soon as we did, as they were at least twelve miles from their destination, and we were going about fifteen an hour. A little distance farther on, we closed one another within a mile, in full view of both parties, when the full power was clapped on, and away we went like a shot, leaving them far behind. They soon perceived this, and pulled up, completely disappointed and exhausted.

A few more minutes brought us to Tonnelero, the scene of our former skirmish; but the place was quite altered. Instead of being dotted with cavalry and soldiers, it

was deserted. A single, wretched, half-naked Gaucho was there, with two little mounted boys, each bearing a white rag, intended for a flag of truce, and evidently, by their gestures, imploring us to have mercy on their house. Of course no attempt was made to annoy them. Indeed we all felt pity for the damage our former fire must have done.

At three o'clock we anchored once again at Obligado, close to Her Majesty's ship Comus.

Thursday.—At day-light we were again steaming down at a very great pace, which we continued without stoppage until half-past five P.M., when, suddenly, we shot out of the river in the same sudden manner we had entered it, and were ushered into the Rio de la Plata by two or three gentle rolls of the vessel, which instantly proved to those below that the open water was gained. The air, too, was quite different, and the bracing sea breeze made us all snuff it up with delight. As night closed in, we anchored about six miles from the island of Martin Garcia, and

felt, for the first time since we entered the river, the comfort of a sound sleep, undisturbed by mosquitos.

Friday.—All this day we were feeling our way, with boats a-head, through the tortuous and difficult passage of Martin Garcia. At two o'clock we got through and sped on towards Colonia, which we passed about sunset. We then considered ourselves quite safe, and went on towards Monte Video. At ten o'clock the water suddenly shoaled from four fathoms to nine feet, and we were once again hard and fast aground. Here we remained all night making preparation; and at day-light the following morning hove her off, and went on to Monte Video, which we reached at ten A.M., and immediately delivered our budget of news and dispatches. We had been, therefore, thirty-nine days absent from Monte Video. Corrientes may be estimated, by the river, as one thousand miles in round numbers from this town. Double that, therefore, for the passage back, and it gives a clear two thousand miles, to which may fairly be added five hundred

more for retracing steps, and other strayings from the straight direction.

Every exertion was made to fill the vessel with coals and provisions, and every preparation again to ascend the Parana with all kinds of supplies for the squadron. Amongst others, were several hundred shells, which were sent on board as dead ones, and consequently stoved in tiers in the gun-room: it was not discovered until days after that they were all live shells! This would not have been known had not curiosity induced us to examine them as they were French, when, to our surprise, we found them all filled. This might have been a most serious oversight to us, as no more precaution was observed with regard to fire and lights than if they had been old iron.

During our stay in the harbour, constant skirmishes took place between besieged and besiegers, with frequent loss of life, and horrible murders. The town, however, was now well supplied by sea; and, from the number of military and naval men, bore a very gay appearance. It was highly instruc-

tive to observe the effect of John Bull's money, circulated by two British regiments and several men of war, in the great alteration that was taking place on the wharfs and landing-places of the city. Numerous piers of elegant and useful proportions were beginning to creep out in all parts.

Saturday.—This day we were lumbered with all kinds of necessaries. This heavy load was not only a serious drawback to the Alecto's efficiency under steam, but likewise very inconvenient and annoying to the officers and men; but, as it was necessary for the assistance and advantage of the squadron, it was cheerfully undertaken, and the best face put upon the matter. Suddenly, news came off that we were to tow up a schooner. "Impossible!" we all said. Our astonishment may easily be conceived when we found that instead of one, *three* schooners were to be towed up; two deeply laden with stores, and one with soldiers for General Paz. The whole of this day, stores and provisions were continually pouring off to the ship, until there was hardly room on

deck, or below, to move or do any of the ship's duty. Towards evening, these large schooners anchored close round us.

Sunday.—Weighed and steamed out of Monte Video with our burdensome tail of three schooners and the Corrientino boat. As the wind was strong against us, we could hardly get a-head at all; and about an hour after dark came to, not having gained eighteen miles. We found the towed vessels a most terrible drag upon us. We struggled on until Tuesday morning, when we communicated with Colonia. We had thus been fifty hours steaming rather more than ninety miles. Fortunately the wind now veered round in our favour; our tail made sail, and we proceeded in a body merrily upwards, anchoring in the evening off the Bocas, or mouths of the Parana.

Thursday.—Still struggling on, consuming an enormous proportion of coal for the distance gained. Exercised great guns and musquetry at trees and Carpinchos, as we ascended, and made every preparation to engage the batteries. We observed that the

river had fallen considerably since our descent, and that several feet of mud-bank is now bare on each side; on which, frequently, are to be seen families of Carpinchos. I had a capital opportunity of observing their habits from the gun-room ports, as this day, once or twice, although with full power on, we did not pass the land at a greater speed than half-a-mile an hour. The wind blew fresh from north-east all day, and the ominous aspect of clouds in the south-west quarter evidently betokened a pamparo. We were not deceived, as it broke on us with great fury, at four A.M.

Friday afternoon we reached Obligado, once more communicated with Her Majesty's ship Comus, and then proceeded. In passing the site of the enemy's dismantled batteries, the sentry fired into us. Shortly after, we came to for the night.

Early on the following morning, we started in high spirits, as a strong south-west wind filled our convoy's sails, and enabled us to rattle up at decent speed. The cold, however, in the early part of the morning, was

intense. As we approached the batteries of Tonnelero, every preparation was made, and about ten o'clock we came within range of the place. Not a single soldier was seen; but numerous workmen were there throwing up embrasures, ten of which we counted, most of them pointing up the river. As these works were evidently intended to annoy the convoy when coming down, we immediately opened fire upon them, and drove the workmen away in all directions. Several, however, had remained hidden behind one of their embankments, but were speedily unkennelled by a thirty-two pound shot going completely through both sides of the works. It was curious to observe the Congreve rockets: they were very much affected by the wind, and had a very singular motion. On leaving the tubes, they preserved the proper straight direction for three or four hundred yards, then suddenly took a semi-circular course, forming altogether a figure similar to a reaping hook, and came down straight, like a falling star, bursting in the ground.

It is difficult to account for this eccentric

motion, unless the very strong breeze that was blowing caused an eddy wind from the cliffs. Very soon, with the assistance of the favourable breeze, we drew out of shot, and ceased firing. Little or no damage was done to the enemy, but a vast deal of good to ourselves, from the capital and cool practice of our arms.

About ten miles above, a miserable, nearly naked, and most wretched looking object was perceived eagerly beckoning to us. The paddles were stopped, and a boat sent for him. On receiving him on board. we found he was a deserter; and had been concealed on the island four days, with nothing to eat but what he could pick up. Some good food speedily revived him, and in a short time he was well enough to give us all the information he possessed about the enemy's movements.

Saturday.—Towards noon, a vessel was perceived a-head, and soon after we anchored alongside H. M. brig Philomel. To our great astonishment we learned that she was going down to Monte Video. Captain

Sulivan informed us that the previous day he had passed the batteries of San Lorenzo. As he was perfectly acquainted with the channel, and knew he could pass close to the cliffs, he thought it most prudent to hug them as near as possible, in case any guns might be mounted. It was fortunate he took this precaution, although nothing hostile was visible but the little Argentine flag. Making a barricade of hammocks and bags for the helmsman, and sending all hands below, except himself and first lieutenant, a light air filling his sails, she glided slowly by, grazing the perpendicular cliff. When close under the first battery, the enemy let drive at her. But so close was the Philomel, that they could not depress their guns sufficiently to touch her decks, the lowest going through the boom mainsail, four or five feet above the hammock netting. They fired several more shot, until the Philomel was quite clear and out of range.

This manner of outwitting them was clever, and reflects great credit on Captain Sulivan. As the wind still held at south-

west, which was an enormous assistance in towing our tail along, we again proceeded, and made as much way as possible before darkness overtook us.

Sunday morning.—On starting, the favourable wind which had for the last forty-eight hours filled the schooner's sails, now left us, and we proceeded but slowly. All the afternoon we were engaged in cutting a port-hole in the gunnel on the quarter-deck, and preparing to shift over the starboard gun, so as to enable us to fight all three guns on the enemy's side. This was effected towards evening, and it was found afterwards to be the easiest trained and most effective gun on the broadside.

When we had come to for the night, we were visited by a deputation from the three schooners. They had heard, from the deserter, that Rosas had sent up heavy guns which were intended to be placed on the barrancas of San Lorenzo. Their fears had magnified the calibre of the guns, and they were evidently in great apprehension. With the greatest possible coolness they demanded

that we should lash them alongside, so that our hull should shelter them from the enemy's fire. This we could not possibly do, even if we had been so inclined, as they were so deeply laden and down in the water, that had they come alongside the paddle-box, the only place where we could receive them, their sides would have pressed in below the paddle beams, and of course smashed our wheels as they revolved. This was duly explained to them, and they departed grumbling. In about an hour they returned, and asking to see Captain Austen, said,

"Sir, if you don't lash us alongside, to protect our men, we will cut the tow ropes and return to Monte Video." Captain Austen replied, "I have orders to take you up the Parana, and up the Parana you go, in spite of anything."

Still they grumbled, were very much dissatisfied, and went on the forecastle to consult together. Whilst the consultation was at its height, the interpreter was sent to them by a waggish youngster, to inform them that if they cut the tow rope, under fire, we

should fire at them. They would therefore be under two fires. This appeared to enlighten them not a little, and they returned on board their respective vessels in a dreadful fright.

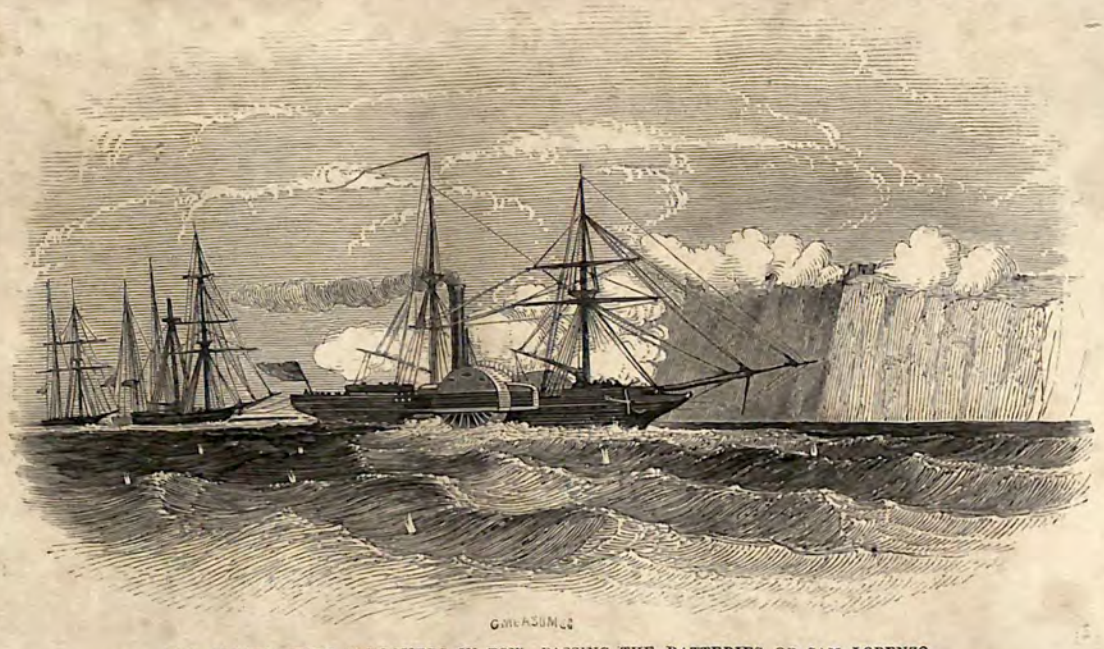
CHAPTER XI.

Sight the Batteries of San Lorenzo—Trying the range with Shell—Commencement of the Action—Closeness of Combatants—Curious effects of Shot—Nonchalance of Men—Good Aim produced by the training of the Excellent—The Master of a Schooner—Activity after Action—Shot between Wind and Water—False Reports—The Fugitives—Account of the late Action by Deserters—Arrival at the City of the Parana—Deliver Ammunition and Provisions—French Admiral's *fiat*—News from Corrientes—Tactics of General Paz—The Alecto ordered to Goya—Guaranis Indians.

MONDAY.—On getting under way this morning, the wind was still blowing briskly against us; and as the sun rose, it freshened still more. At eight o'clock we came in sight of

the batteries, about eight miles a-head, but such was the heavy drag of vessels and opposing wind that we hardly made good one mile an hour. All this time we were accompanied along the barrancas by a squadron of cavalry; and, although they had much more ground to go over than we, they never exceeded a walking pace, and frequently halted.

Gradually we drew our weary length along. At two o'clock we went to quarters, being then about one mile and a half from the batteries. At a quarter after two, we began to try the range with the long pivot forecastle gun; but without effect, as the shell burst in the air some hundred yards short. It was beautiful to see the explosion, of which the report was plainly heard on board. At half-past two, our shells began to fall with effect; and, in ten minutes more, we got our three guns and rockets into full play. This was answered by the lower guns on the batteries with round shot, until we advanced to the narrowest part, certainly within two hundred



THE ALECTO, WITH SCHOONERS IN TOW, PASSING THE BATTERIES OF SAN LORENZO.
From a picture in the possession of Captain Mackinnon, painted by J. M. Gilbert, Marine Painter, Lymington.

and fifty yards, when they peppered us with round and grape together. At this time their guns were raking us from a-head and astern, in such a position that we could not get any of ours to bear in return; and could only fire at those abreast of us. In this state we remained, hardly moving the least a-head, for twenty minutes, receiving the fire of seven eighteen pounders, several of which pointed down upon our decks.

During this period, we fired away every round of grape and cannister in the vessel, and were then reduced to round shot. For the last few minutes we were exchanging a smart fire of musquetry. We then gradually went a-head, and, as the river widened and current lessened, speedily drew out of shot, having been one hour and fifteen minutes under fire. It is surprising that not one of our men was killed. The only person touched was Captain Austen, who received a violent blow on the thigh from a spent grape shot.

Of course the poor vessel was rather mauled, but some of the shot produced such

curious effects that I think them worthy of note.

For instance, one shot knocked to pieces five spare oars in the fore-hold. Another would have passed completely through the boilers, had it not luckily been stopped by a quantity of coal bags, purposely left on deck in that position to provide against such a contingency. The first bag it struck gave it rather an upward direction, which carried it parallel to the deck, through five or six more bags filled with coals, and then rolled harmlessly into the scuppers, driving with great force splinters of coal about the deck.

But the most curious escape was from a shot which went through both paddle-wheels. It struck the paddle-box on the enemy's side, three or four feet above the shaft, went clean through the wheel without touching any part of it, and then passed across the deck, and through the other paddle-box, not above eighteen inches from the shaft, still not touching a single blade, or any portion of the paddles.

A few minutes after the action, I opened

the paddle-box doors to see what damage had been done; and, to my infinite astonishment, perceived that, at the rate the wheels were revolving (about seventeen times a minute) it appeared quite impossible to fire a pistol ball through without striking some part of them. And yet this 18-lb. shot had gone through both wheels, leaving no marks but the hole at entering on one side and departing on the other.

One more shot deserves remark: it came through the ship's side on the water line, passed through her lower deck forward, cutting away the armourer's bench and a bread barge, then struck two 32-lb. shot in the rack, knocked one into five parts, and the other into three.

In going into action, the men appeared to take it as a matter of course; but, as the plot thickened and they warmed at the work, they tossed the long guns about like playthings, and indeed managed them in an admirable manner. This I attribute entirely to the system taught in the Excellent; and it may be worthy of remark that every good

shot I was able to trace, was directed by a man drilled in that admirable school for gunnery.

Although we fired between seventy and eighty rounds, I fear little damage was done in proportion to the ammunition expended, particularly in the narrowest parts; for unless the shot struck the exact edge of the cliff, or muzzle of the enemy's gun, as it was run out to fire, it expended itself, from its great elevation, far inland. In the meantime, the enemy were securely posted under the curve thus formed by the shot.

At sun-set we came to as usual, and were immediately visited by some of the Monte Videan officers from one of the schooners, who gave us a very amusing account of the conduct of their crew. When the action commenced, the master of the vessel came down into the cabin where the Monte Videan officers were all sitting, and began crying and tearing his hair, saying he knew he should never see his wife and children again. At length a shot came through the schooner's side into the cabin and struck a

bag of bread, which it scattered over the party, making them appear like dusty millers. The master then broke out into the most violent invectives against the "infernal, obstinate, foolish, brutal English, who," added he, "are easing their damnable machinery to fight the cliffs, curse them! I am undone! I am undone!"

At this moment, another shot came in, passing through the cabin under the table, and between the officers' legs, without touching one of them. The poor old master then gave himself up to despair, and wrapped his head in his poncho, waiting his doom. From this state of lethargy he was soon roused by another shot cutting away the main-boom close to the helmsman's head, who immediately let go the tiller and rushed below in a paroxysm of terror, swearing all Englishmen were as mad as March hares; and he, for one, would never have anything more to do with them as long as he lived.

After a rattle or two from grape, the body of vessels were drawn after us out of the fire without any further damage, by our irre-

sistible power of steam. It is but justice to the crews of the schooners to say that the moment the action ceased, they came on deck in great spirits, and immediately repaired their damages with skill and expedition.

On sounding the well at quarters, a considerable depth of water was found in the Alecto's hold. An immediate search was made; and a shot-hole discovered forward between wind and water which had not been perceived before. This was speedily plugged up.

Tuesday.—Still a strong wind against us, and hardly advancing at all. As the expenditure of coals was very great, it was decided to anchor and repair damages more substantially, as the slight repairs effected the previous evening, were only temporary. The remainder of the day was therefore taken up in plugging shot-holes, and mending other injuries in the best manner our means would allow. As the experiment of cutting a port for an extra gun had been so successful, another was cut on the starboard side, and all the guns brought round there, in case

General Urquieza had formed any position on the heights of Punta Gorda, which formidable barranca we were now approaching. Not that we expected much hostility there, as the last news from Corrientes had described his army as hard pushed by General Paz; but as nothing is to be believed in this country, except accounts of murders, we considered it much better to be prepared.

Wednesday.—About eleven o'clock, we passed Punta Gorda, and were again struck with the capabilities of this part of Entre-rios as a commanding point to interrupt the navigation of the river. We had this day, however, a rattling breeze in our favour, so strong that frequently the schooners were obliged to shorten sail to prevent running into the Alecto. This resulted from the paucity of men in our vessel, who were unable to set and take in the square sails, as the different reaches of the river required.

About ten miles above Punta Gorda, on rounding a small point, a naked man appeared holding a lance with a white flag. As we drew nearer, we perceived four others, and

with them a cream-coloured horse. Gesticulating violently to us, when we had arrived within two hundred yards, a couple of the youngest urged the horse into the river, and forced him to swim directly across the stream. A boat was lowered to pick them up. The moment the boat touched the shore, they commenced dressing hastily, and crammed into her great quantities of the prime part of several bullocks, their ricaos, or country saddles, and other articles belonging to them. When the boat was well loaded she came alongside with two of the party, speedily followed by the others.

Our new friends, who were deserters from General Urquieza, informed us that the guns with which we had fought lately, at San Lorenzo, had been expedited from Buenos Ayres by Rosas, in the fond hope of sinking us; that they fully expected to do so, and had been greatly annoyed at our escape. This accounted to us for the number of people, including even ladies, who came up with us, on the barrancas, with the full expectation of seeing the English steamer

either blown up or sunk; much in the same manner as ladies, in England, would throng to see a review, or any other amusing spectacle.

It must have been provoking to them to see us still continue, with our heavy and cumbersome tail, to go upwards. Our fire becoming heavier every moment the action continued, instead of being silenced, or even slackened, by their superior force and commanding position.

At six o'clock, we anchored amongst the squadron, off the city of Parana.

Thursday.—All this day we were employed delivering shot, shell, and provisions, to the various vessels of the squadron. It delighted us to hear that two of the schooners were to be left behind, as they were loaded with spare stores for French men-of-war. Admiral Tréhouart, the excellent and deservedly-beloved chief of the French Parana squadron, was vexed at our having brought up the schooners. "Why didn't you cut them adrift?" said he; "they only contain spare stores for us, which we can easily do without; they, and the whole of their cargoes

are not worth the trouble and risk they have caused you."

In the afternoon a canoe came down from Corrientes with bad news. It appeared that when General Madariaga was taken prisoner, his brother was governor of Corrientes. A party in the town, thinking the governor might be swayed by feelings of fraternal affection, wished to wrest from him the reins of government. This had created a kind of revolution, the effect of which was to prevent General Paz from pursuing the army of Urquieza, who had been obliged to retreat out of the province of Corrientes. Paz had drawn him on, by a pretended retreat, into the soft marshy district of the Laguna Ybera, where the enemy's horses were speedily thrown out of condition, and became unhealthy from the wet soil, to which they had been unaccustomed. The advantage thus gained, could not, however, be followed up; a powerful force was withdrawn from the army, and sent to overawe the turbulent faction at Corrientes. This being the state of the province, the Alecto was ordered to

go up to Goya to protect the commerce; as, from the now falling state of the river, it was not considered advisable to attempt any further advance towards the capital city.

Friday.—This morning, taking only one vessel in tow, namely, the schooner containing the Monte Videan soldiers, we again proceeded up the river. In the afternoon we fell in with the Dolphin, delivered despatches, shell, and provisions, and made good way until sun-set.

Saturday.—About eleven A.M. we fell in with our old friend, the Fanny, coming down the river with a load of bullocks. Having delivered our commissions to her, we again proceeded, anticipating the following day to be amongst friendly people, on the starboard-bank. The left bank was perfectly wild and uninhabited, except by the Guaranis Indians, who, being at war with Corrientes, were hostile to the whole world; for they knew no other people, nor were even aware of any existing, so great is their isolation and ignorance.

CHAPTER XII.

Alecto on Shore—Ship on her Broadside—Turn of Current—Singular position of Steamer—Sand Bank diminishes—The Alecto released—Proceed with single Engine—Flamingoes—The Elk—Sailors' Supper—Mosquitos—Slow Progress—River Falling—Luck of the Alecto—Great Haul of Fish—Thunder Storm—The Surprise—The Sting Ray—Curious Turtle—Remains of the Island—Formation of Islands—The married Monkeys—Another Disaster—Steam vanquished by the Current—Bank formed by the Current.

SUNDAY.—At eleven o'clock, as we were going on merrily, the vessel's heel slightly touched the bottom, and before the engines could be stopped and reversed, her hinder parts were hard and fast aground. The

strong current immediately took hold of the starboard bow, whirled her round on her keel with great rapidity, and forced her broadside on to a small bank.

The engines were kept going aback for some minutes after she struck, and unfortunately the mouth of the injection-pipe of port engine got in contact with the sand. The consequence was that, at every stroke, sand was drawn in, which found its way into the cylinder of the air-pump, and when a certain portion was deposited there, interfered with the movement of the bucket, and, consequently, carried away the bracket of rocking motion of that engine.

The whole force of the current now came full on, and heeled her over so much, that her starboard paddles were lifted out of the water. Every effort failed to heave her off, or even to cant her, and at sun-set she remained immoveably fixed; but it was observed that the vessel's hull gave the stream a slight turn off, and that a few feet from her stern the depth was increasing from the new direction of the current; an anchor, therefore,

was laid out on the quarter, nearly astern, hove taught, and we patiently waited the result with an anchor-watch, and both bowers a'cock-bill. The rest of the men were glad to turn in after a heavy day's work.

During the early part of the night, the sand-bank astern was rapidly diminishing; and at midnight had entirely left the after part of the vessel afloat, as appeared by the water rushing, like a mill-stream, up under the counter. At two o'clock, the bank was quite gone to the paddle-shaft: she was now in a singular position, her nose (as it were) held fast by the sand-bank, and her stern by the cable. It was necessary to keep the cable fast, otherwise she would have forged on the bank again, and perhaps in a worse position than before. The struggle now commenced, and the ship seemed to feel it; a stronger rush of the current came down, and made the poor Alecto bump and grind her bottom, and strain the cable, till the tar was squeezed out in large tears.

At half-past three her agitation and throes

became so violent, that I could not persuade myself we were in perfectly smooth water, and trembled for the vessel's false keel and copper. Suddenly, with a heavy grind, she swung off into deep water, and the best bower was let go in six fathoms. A long hawser had been made fast (ready for this event) to the stern-cable, the stopper of which was cut the moment the foremost anchor was let go. She, therefore, immediately swung to the bower, and still retained the end of the hawser fast in-board.

To repair the damage of the port engine, would take some days; but as one engine was better than none, and sufficient to take us slowly on, Captain Austen decided to advance immediately, particularly as the Baccianos informed him that the season was at hand for the river to fall rapidly. As nothing, however, could be effected this day, on account of the general derangement of our gear, it was determined to remain in the present anchorage, in order that every thing might be re-adjusted.

Leisure was thus afforded for several of

the officers to land on an island; and whilst some were hauling the net with great pleasure and success, others, amongst whom was myself, rambled inland for any game that might turn up.

Some beautiful Flamingoes with elegant pink plumage were shot, together with great numbers of duck, teal, &c. Suddenly a huge deer, or elk, was perceived, and every exertion made to secure him; but notwithstanding his size and his large spreading horns, he managed to find his way through the close and entwined brushwood much faster than we could possibly follow, and escaped. We then sent two good shots on the lee-side of the island, and tried to force him out by setting fire to the brushwood, but without success, as it was not sufficiently dry to burn freely.

On returning to the fishing party, we found them in high glee at their success, having captured a large quantity of fish. An immense pile of dry wood had been collected: at dusk it was lighted, and used as a temporary kitchen by the sailors, who

were boiling the great, fat, huge fish, just caught, and cramming them down with keen relish and great dispatch.

The feast was terminated by a swarm of mosquitos, which settled down upon us in countless multitudes, getting inside our linen, and trowsers, and stockings, and nearly driving us mad with their irritating and painful bites.

Tuesday.—The disabled engine being disconnected, we once more proceeded on our upward course, with the schooner still in tow; but, as the wind was N.N.E., and the current as strong, or stronger than ever, our progress was very slow, rarely more than one mile an hour, frequently less, and sometimes we were nearly stationary.

This day we perceived that the river was falling more rapidly than ever. Numerous miniature cascades were tumbling into it on each side, draining the islands, and marshes, and lakes, in the interior of the main land. Serious thoughts were entertained that we should be unable to reach our destination, Goya; and that, even if we

did so, we might be detained there. No doubt can be entertained that our fears were well-grounded; and, had it not been for a very unusual rise of the river, as will be hereafter seen, our fears would have been realized. But, by an extraordinary piece of luck which attended every movement of the Alecto during her passages in these rivers, she escaped the year's detention, which otherwise, most assuredly, would have been her lot.

On anchoring in the evening, the amateur fishermen and fowlers were extremely anxious to make another attempt, as their imaginations were very much fired by yesterday's success. Accordingly, a large party landed abreast of the steamer, within eighty yards, and a little cove was fixed upon as the best suited for the net. The fowlers, although anxious to depart on their expedition, determined to remain for the first haul of the net, which was soon laid out in the cove; and, as the eager fishers at each end were dragging it in with greedy eyes, a violent commotion in the water proved that numerous

and large must be the haul. In a minute more, the centre of the net was safely landed in triumph. An immense quantity of fish was secured. The excitement and exultation were great.

Before dusk the fishers had succeeded in capturing nearly, if not quite, half-a-ton. The fowlers were likewise very successful. The Alecto's larder, both for officers and men, was superabundantly supplied.

Wednesday.—Although, at day-light, when we got under way, not the slightest symptom of bad weather could be perceived, yet, as the barometer, the previous night, had fallen two-tenths, we confidently looked forward to a pamparo. We were not deceived; for, at nine o'clock, a black cloud appeared in the south-west, and, twenty minutes after, a very violent thunder-storm burst upon us. The anchor was immediately dropped. Towards evening, the rain ceased, and several parties went in different directions for game. As a large flock of flamingoes were feeding on an island, I immediately jumped into the dingey with two boys and an intelligent

little middy, Purvis by name. We pulled stealthily towards the birds, as I was anxious to procure some of their beautiful pink feathers. The water was so shallow, that the boat grounded a hundred yards from the beach, and we all jumped out to wade on shore.

As we advanced, the water deepened until it nearly reached our middles. It was therefore necessary to hold the gun high with one hand, and tuck up the tails of our shooting-jackets, which contained our powder flasks, in the other, a very awkward position. Suddenly, my feet slipped from beneath me: I staggered, and had much difficulty in keeping my gun free from contact with the water. On recovering my equipoise, I perceived the stream agitated all round. It immediately struck me that an alligator lay concealed close at hand. I must confess I did not like it at all, and expected every moment to find one of my legs in the brute's jaws. I therefore brought my gun instantly to my shoulder, prepared for any attack. Thus I remained for about a minute; but all was

quiet, the water having subsided into its usual placidity. I then called one of the dingey boys to bring a boat-hook and grope all round my position, to try and poke the brute out, whatever it might be.

After one or two digging probes, the same agitation was renewed, and a huge broad, brown back appeared for a moment on the surface; quite long enough, however, to receive the large shot with which both my barrels were loaded. The agitation now increased in violence, and the splashings on the surface, mixed with blood, showed that some severe wound had been given. The report of my gun attracted all the spy-glasses in the Alecto.

A boat was immediately despatched to our assistance with a couple of boarding pikes. The brown back was speared by them and borne towards the shallow water, where the creature was dispatched. It proved to be an enormous sting-ray; the fish was so heavy that we were obliged to tow it off to the vessel and hoist it in with a whip. When cut up, and served out to the ship's company,

the solid meat weighed one hundred and thirty-five pounds, without offal, or other waste parts. Every one agreed that it was the largest flat fish (except halibut) they had ever beheld, and what surprised us all much more was the extreme delicacy and good flavour of the flesh, certainly better than any they had hitherto tasted in the Parana. The fishing party caught likewise a fresh water turtle weighing about fifteen pounds. It was oblong in the back, the head folding over, instead of drawing in, which gave it a singular appearance.

Thursday.—A very violent pamparo prevented anything being done until 10 A.M. The weather then moderating, we resumed our course. At one o'clock we passed the creek which led to the town of Esquina. In the afternoon we neared the wreck of what had been an island; of which nothing remained but a few stumps of trees above water. All the rest, about three-quarters of a mile long, had entirely disappeared. Two months previously, when we passed, it bore the appearance of a substantial and solid land. No

doubt the slightest cause, such as the trunk of a tree, or any other trivial obstacle, forms the nucleous of islands, which at first slightly, and, as they grow, materially, change the direction and force of a current. This change occasionally extends downwards, with the current towards the sea, for many hundred miles.

Friday, April 16th.—This was a perplexing day: every thing was against us, wind, current, and shoal water. After a struggle during the whole of day-light, we were obliged to anchor at sun-set, having gained only fourteen miles. Evidently the river was falling rapidly, as the mud banks grew wider every day; and the drainage rushed hourly with greater impetuosity into the river. The conversation now ran upon our very doubtful position, if any casualty should happen to us, as we had only one engine.

Saturday, April 17th.—Very slow work indeed. With all our efforts, we did not exceed our yesterday's advance. This cannot be wondered at, as twice during this day, we were losing ground, although with full

power of single engine. On anchoring, the pestilential mosquitos came off in horrible swarms, and rendered all hands perfectly miserable and sleepless.

Sunday, 18th.—Onwards still. On passing some large trees about eleven o'clock, when we ought to have been at church, if the service would have allowed it, a large black monkey with very glossy hair, was perceived sitting very composedly with his arms round a handsome brown one. The sailors swore they were man and wife, and were in the honeymoon: they stared at the steamers with profound gravity, but did not show the slightest astonishment.

At noon we came in sight of the convoy's mast-heads, lying at Goya, and began to congratulate ourselves on speedily arriving at the anchorage, after our difficult and tedious navigation.

At two o'clock, when within four miles of our destination, and all hands anticipating a speedy arrival, an ominous grate or grind, (never to be mistaken or forgotten by a sailor) excited general attention. The engine was

THE ALECTO AGROUND, SIX INCHES WATER UNDER HER BOW.
From a picture in the possession of Captain Mackinnon, painted by J. M. Gilbert, Marine Painter, Lymington.

immediately stopped, and an attempt made to reverse it: but alas! the ship had lost her way, the current was too powerful; nature took art at a disadvantage, and the engine hung on the centre. The Alecto was worse than powerless, her engines nought but dead weight. The exasperated current, wroth at the triumph of steam hitherto, now laid an enormous pressure on the starboard bow, and drove it round with great force broadside on to a sand-bank, six inches at the least less than she drew. She immediately commenced bumping so violently as to render it extremely unpleasant to all those who dwelt in her bosom. The Alecto remained thus aground for several days, and we did not succeed in getting her off until Wednesday the 21st of April.

Some very peculiar circumstances were connected with the position of the vessel aground, the effects of the current and means of rescue; but the detail has been omitted, from the author's fear of appearing tedious to all but those of his own profession.

In the course of forty-eight hours, when

she was lying broadside on to the stream, the alluvium deposited by the water rushing round her bow, had risen to the surface, forming a solid sand bank. As soon as the Alecto was hauled clear of this, the whole force of the current appeared directed to demolish the obstacle, which was speedily accomplished in two hours, and the whole swept away.

CHAPTER XIII.

River Falling—Dreadful Heat—Sleeping Aloft—Cheap Beef—Capabilities of the Country for making Money—Price of Land—Price of Stock—Capital required—Splendid Prospects, should Peace prevail—Mr. Davidson's Saladeira—Last Chance for Merchandise—The wholesale Slaughter—Capability of Parana Islands to produce Rice—Melancholy Reflections—Causes of Cruelty—Skill of Gauchos—Fierce Fire of Beef—Shooting—Baby-beaters — Desperero — Speculations—The poor Mares—Abundance of Food—Verdant Wall—Combinations of Flowers—Abundance of Game—Seed hunting—Distribution of Seeds—Gigantic Gold-fish — Streets of Goya — Alcalde's Dinner—Orange Trees—Chasque from Esquina.

THURSDAY, 22nd of April.—The first thing perceived this morning was, that the river had again fallen. The broken part of the

engine having been repaired, it was determined to start with both engines as usual; but before lifting the anchor, they were turned round to see that all was right. Half a turn was hardly made, when the unfortunate upright again broke, although in a different place, and totally disabled the engine for the time. The cause, as it afterwards proved, was the piston-rod being bent, in consequence of the parallel motion being put out by the first accident. This was enough to break any engine in the world, and it had unluckily been overlooked till now. We therefore proceeded with the single engine, and anchored in the afternoon at the apparent confluence of several creeks; but in reality in a fork of the Parana, filled with numerous islands.

The heat this afternoon was most oppressive, although so late in the season; and the mosquitos came off in such innumerable swarms, that I do not believe a single person slept that night, unless protected by muslin curtains. Many of the men passed the night at the mast-head, and chatted and dosed the

time away. In the cabins, the infernal buz caused by the venomous flies was intolerably loud.

Friday, 23rd April.—The merchants were very much pleased at our arrival, as they felt great apprehension from the state of anarchy to which the country is reduced. All the English and American settlers were killing their cattle, and making every exertion to wind up their affairs and leave the province by the present convoy. Beef, therefore, was a perfect drug, and our men had only to ask for a quarter, or any quantity they wanted, to have it. Fish also swarmed, consequently it was indeed the land of plenty for us.

I had an opportunity this afternoon, during a walk on shore, of conversing with several very intelligent individuals, who were well acquainted with the country. From their evidence, and my own observation, I am quite certain, that if affairs were settled, and a prospect held out of a fair and good government, so that life and property could be secured, any settler of small capital might

speedily realize an enormous fortune. The most simple means, and which would require least outlay, would be a cattle breeding farm. I took pains to get the following particulars of the expense of one in this province: but it must be borne in mind that the prices of lands were necessarily lowered by the recent vicinity of a hostile army, and civil distractions.

An estate of nine miles square, enclosed on three sides by branches of rivers or creeks, most fertile, and partially wooded, was on sale for a sum, in ready money, that would amount to about two hundred and fifty pounds sterling. A thousand head of cattle might be had at ten shillings a head, and five hundred horses and mares, at about five shillings the average, as mares, when purchased alone, would be much cheaper. Adding these sums together, the whole outlay to purchase and stock this princely property, to commence with, would be,—land, two hundred and fifty pounds,—cattle, five hundred pounds,—horses, mares, &c., one hundred and twenty-five pounds,—total, eight hundred and

seventy-five pounds. These herds would increase at the rate of fifty per cent. the first year, and so on in progression. If, therefore, the holder was prudent for the first few years, there would be hardly any limit to the extent of his stock. One-fourth of the increase might be killed with advantage to the breed, and the hide, and tallow, and beef, return a handsome income. It is hardly possible to look forward to the ultimate fortune of a steady economical man, with a capital of five thousand pounds, who had sufficient fortitude and forbearance not to force his profits too soon. This is certainly a splendid prospect for a capitalist, should the political horizon of South America clear up, and perfect security for life and property prevail; a state of things, however, of which I can see no immediate prospect.

Monday, 26th April.—At day-break, Captain Austen and myself started in the gig for Goya, for the purpose of observation. We landed a short distance below the town, where several vessels were loading hides, salted beef, horse-hair, and other com-

modities, in a desperate hurry, to enable them to go down under protection of the men-of-war, past the batteries of San Lorenzo. The establishment at which we landed, belongs entirely to an Englishman of the name of Davidson, who, having married a native lady, a relation of the governor, and thus become naturalised, has laid out some capital in establishing a large distillery of canea, or rum, from the sugar-cane; also a large cattle-farm, or estancia. I was informed by him that he owned sixty square miles of land, of a most fertile and productive nature, from which, in consequence of the very unsettled state of the country, he had been obliged to part, including the stock of horses, cattle, sheep, &c., on it, and eight hundred mares, in exchange for four thousand head of cattle, to be immediately delivered to him at his establishment. He was killing these animals with the utmost dispatch, to convert their bodies into portable mercantile commodities, and send them through the hostile parts of the Parana, by this, in the present state of the country, supposed last chance.

The final instalment of cattle, comprising one thousand five hundred head, arrived as I was conversing with him; and a noble lot of animals they were. He calculated that it would take five clear days to dispose of them, or rather to transfer their bodies into the staple produce of the country; consisting of hides, tallow, salt and gerked beef, and hair. Although a revolting sight, I determined to see the operation of this wholesale slaughter.

Mr. Davidson showed me an immense vat, into which a small pipe was introduced from a diminutive boiler. He informed me it was intended to hold the bones of one hundred newly-slaughtered bullocks, from which were expressed, by means of steam, six pipes of juice or marrow. This, of course, is extremely valuable. He also showed me a sample of rice, grown in one of the Parana islands, which appeared to be of a very fine and excellent quality. I was much struck by an observation he made, which seemed extremely apposite and correct.

"The islands in the Parana," he said, "are capable, with the least labour and

expence, of growing more rice than the world can consume."

I should add, from what I have heard of the cultivation of rice, that these islands are intended for it by nature, being overflowed exactly at the proper time of year to nourish the plant to perfection. It is indeed a melancholy thing to see English, American, and other foreigners, with all their enterprise, capital, and industry, working day and night to clear out their property from this most productive, most beautiful, and most healthy soil and climate.

We were quite delighted to hear this morning that the convoy were allowed ten days longer to complete their arrangements. I was pretty certain this would be the case from my knowledge of our chief's character, whose quickness of perception, as regards the language, customs, and feelings of the country, exceeds that of every person I ever met. Only conceive the benighted state of this country when the germs of civilisation in its European population are driven away. It is really dreadful to think of the disgust-

ing immorality and horrible barbarism to which a land, most blessed by God's providence, but most cursed by man's wickedness, will return.

A peculiarity exists in this country and climate which, I think, in some measure accounts for the outrageous and horrible cruelties of the inhabitants towards man and beast. I will divide it into three heads: Firstly, the people being derived from Spain, a country notorious for its cruel and bloody propensities: Secondly, their familiarising children of all conditions (except the higher classes) with the sight of blood, by the constant slaughter of cattle; indeed, they provide their children with a knife as soon as they can walk: and, Thirdly, the extreme excitability of the climate. These, and the insecure state of life and property, are the principal causes of the dreadful butcheries and murders of which we so constantly hear or read. I can only add, if I were to write down all the appalling scenes I have witnessed, I should be deemed a drawer of the long-bow, and unworthy of belief.

But to return to the slaughter-house. Mr. Davidson very obligingly took me to his saladeira, or hide and beef salting-place, and showed me the whole operation. The killing of the unfortunate brutes was conducted with horrid and revolting cruelty; but the very skilful manner in which the lassos were thrown, and the extreme coolness and vigilance of the guachos, were admirable. Immediately the animals were pithed, the guachos disentangled their lassos, and left them to the skinner, who proceeded with great skill and celerity in skinning, disembowelling, and cutting off the fore legs and quarters. A bullock-cart then took the meat and hide, and proceeded with it to the shambles, or cutting-up place. The quarters were then hung on a sort of frame-work in long rows, and were taken off by cutters-up as required, who shaved off narrow flakes, and then returned the bones to the frame, leaving many pounds of good meat on them, which they utterly disregarded, as well as the meat of the heads. Carts then conveyed the meat, when ready, to the open sheds,

where it was placed in vats twenty feet square, and laid in layers of salt and flesh, alternately; these looked so large, that they resembled the commencement of an English hay-stack. Whilst I was there, I saw two hundred and three animals killed, and the pile of meat had reached the height of three feet and upwards. As the whole of this mass of flesh still quivered with vitality, you may suppose I was much pleased to see the arrival of the boat which was to convey me away from so horrid a scene.

But so thoroughly did curiosity conquer repugnance, that on the following day I went again to the saladeira, to see the concluding process, and found the daily butchery just over, two hundred and four more having been slaughtered. I had the curiosity to examine the furnace which heated the boiler for extracting the bone-juice: the fuel was composed of bones and beef—yes, veritable beef—the coarser parts—which, with the bones that had been before deprived of their marrow, made a furious and very hot fire. Mr. Davidson was kind enough to

tell me the cost of each animal, which, as it gives a good idea of the profits to be made in this country in peaceable times, I will put down. The value of the different parts of a bullock, by the last quotation from the Monte Video market, is as follows :—

Wet hide, average weight forty-five pounds, is 4½d. per pound, equal to 16s. 10½d. The parts of the animal salted, say, although much under the mark, one hundred weight, £1 6s. per hundred weight. Fat, tallow, and marrow, average half hundred weight, at £2 10s. per hundred weight. Adding, therefore, the three items together, it amounts to £3 7s. 10½d. on each animal, from which, by subtracting 10s. as prime cost, and 10s. expences (by far too much), there remains a clear profit of £2 7s. 10½d.

Tuesday, 27th.—As it was reported that ducks were numerous in the neighbourhood of the saladeira, a party went up to shoot some if possible. Five or six little nearly naked boys accompanied us on horseback, to guide us to the place where sport was expected. They led us about half-a-mile off,

to several large shallow ponds, none more than two feet deep. These were literally crammed with wild fowl of every description, and so stupidly tame, that the sport was a perfect butchery. The most amusing part, by far, was the delighted excitement with which my mounted beaters galloped off, at a breakneck pace, to pick up dead birds, or chase the wounded ones, not caring for mud, or swamp, or mire. Their amazement also was indeed great, to see the fat ducks tumbling down, right and left, as they were flying towards, or across us.

Having bagged as many as were wanted, we returned to the saladeira; and, being desirous to reward our juvenile assistants for their trouble, tried to procure change for a dollar. To my great surprise, I received twenty-eight or thirty bank-notes for my silver dollar. Two a-piece were given to our infant horsemen, which sent them capering off with delight as hard as they could gallop.

During this time, the operation of killing was rapidly going forward. Suddenly, a

a great outcry was heard, and a rushing noise. "Desperero! Desperero!" was the cry. All the unfortunate cattle, amounting to several hundred, rushed out of the corals in a body, and were off into the woods. The operations were immediately suspended, and the gauchos, mounting their horses, went after the alarmed herd, and were instantly lost to view in the distance.

As the business of the saladeira was thus stopped for a time, we went to Mr. Davidson's house, and conversed with him on the subject of his leaving the country."

"Ah," said he, with a deep sigh, "if there was only peace and quietness in this land for one year, what a fortune I could make!"

"How so?" asked I.

"Well, sir," said he, "I will explain it. Mares are of little, or no value; at least, I could easily purchase fifty thousand, for a shilling a-piece, within fifty miles of this spot. Two hundred a day might be killed at my establishment here, their hides cured, and tallow extracted. The hides would fetch at least twelve shillings a-piece; and each

animal would produce at least twenty-five pounds of tallow; which, at the same price as the former estimate for horned cattle, would amount, in addition to the hides, to the sum of £61,250, minus fifty thousand shillings (£2,500), as the allowance to the dealers. But I believe the value of hides, and quantity of tallow, is much underrated. What money is to be made here to be sure!"

There is no doubt that my friend's calculation was well founded, as I learned, from observation, that the poorest man always had á tropilla (a small troop) of mares, for sale; but, in consequence of want of capital and enterprise, they were unmarketable.

Alas, alas for the poor mares, that their sinews and hides should only be thought of, when Providence had intended them for services of an hundredfold more value, if properly applied.

As the herd were now seen returning in the distance, we left the kind-hearted, busy, and anxious Mr. Davidson, and went down to the bank of the river to wait for our boat. We

now had a good opportunity of looking around us, and I observed a boy of about ten years old with a coarse and clumsy hook fastened to the end of a cod line ten fathoms long, swinging it round his head and launching it into the stream as far as possible. At every third or fourth throw he pulled out a fine fish, weighing from three to twenty pounds. I mention this to prove the extraordinary abundance of food with which this river and country abounds.

On pulling down the creek towards the vessel, our attention was attracted by the peculiar appearance of the densely wooded banks. The trunks of the trees, to the height of thirty feet, were completely enveloped with climbing plants of great luxuriance and beauty, and so closely and compactly did they grow, that they showed like a verdant wall. As the tops of the creeping plants presented a broken outline, the effect resembled old, frowning, and ruined battlements, enveloped in ivy. The flowers were white and blue, and as large (the white in particular) as a dessert plate. When at some distance they so com-

pletely deceived me, that I fully believed the sailors had been placing white cloths out to dry. Sometimes a line of the blue flowers crossed a line of the white, and various other charming combinations were formed.

When the rest of the officers returned on board, they brought so large a stock of game, such as ducks, partridges, pigeons, &c., that the birds were served out in equal portions to the ship's company, and were sufficient to last them two days.

Wednesday, 28th.—As I was anxious to procure some seeds of the beautiful flowers already mentioned, I started an hour after breakfast with a party of men. My endeavours were successful, but not without much difficulty. It was necessary, in order to reach the seed, to cut down two large trees. I had the good fortune to collect several other kinds of curious climbers, which are now dispersed in Lancashire, Surrey, and Dorsetshire, in several of the best and most scientific gardens in England, particularly those of my relatives, Mr. Entwisle of Foxholes, Rochdale, and Mr. Ramsay, of Beaminster, Dorset. Both

these gentlemen, being skilful amateurs of horticulture, will, no doubt, succeed in naturalizing the above (to us) unknown floral specimens of Paraguay.

We next turned our attention to fishing, and soon found a small lagoon admirably adapted for the purpose. In this, the net was carefully laid out, and drawn in with amazing success; but it was perceived that one kind of fish, by great activity, jumped clear of the meshes and got away. On the second haul, therefore, the boat was fastened to the corks, in the centre of the net, and managed by a man sitting on the gunnel. When the net was nearly in, a prodigious commotion took place, and five of the kind mentioned above charged the boat. Three of them cleared it, and got safe off; the fourth hit an unlucky wight on the head, and both fish and man tumbled together under the thwarts. The fifth, an enormous fellow, jumped diagonally, instead of at the broadside, and came flop down in the stern sheets, to our very great satisfaction, as, upon measuring him, he proved to be full twenty-

six inches long. But our greatest surprise was its exact similarity to the gold fish, kept in glass globes in England.

Thursday, 29th April.—This day we took an excursion to the town of Goya, a miserable collection of huts, with here and there a good house. The streets cross each other at right angles, and are without drainage of any kind. The consequence is, that large ponds of feculant water are formed in hollows. The theory on which the inhabitants appear to construct their roads, is exactly the reverse to that of Mac Adam, the surface being concave instead of convex; canals in wet weather, would be a fitter name than streets, and a small canoe after rains more applicable than a carriage.

We dined with the Alçalde, Don Garcia, and were entertained with a most excellent repast. The dishes in the old Spanish style, were extremely palatable.

After looking about us some little time, we walked across the country, towards Mr. Davidson's saladeira, a distance of about a mile. The land was evidently rich and fertile, and

capable of producing anything. Myriads of horned cattle, together with horses, sheep, and pigs, were quietly grazing, as far as the eye could reach, in every direction, and large clumps of orange trees, completely covered with the golden fruit, greeted and charmed the eye.

On reaching the salting place, we found, to our great satisfaction, that the horrible daily butchery was just over.

Saturday.—This day news arrived by Chasque from Esquina that the enemy's general, Urquieza, had liberated Don Madariaga, and that he was rapidly approaching Goya, on his way to Corrientes, with amicable proposals to that province. This naturally caused great excitement, as it was universally supposed by every person, that Madariaga was still a prisoner in Entre Rios, if not murdered. Soon after the report, his arrival confirmed it. Should a pacific arrangement ensue, it will have the effect of soon settling the affairs of the Rio de la Plata, as the only pretence of Rosas for closing the river is that he is the possessor of both banks, which will be no longer in his

power should this alliance take place. Many, however, of the old residents say that it is only a piece of treachery on the part of Urquieza to gain time, and that, in his heart, he is a mere creature of Rosas.*

* An opinion which has turned out to be singularly correct, as it now appears that Rosas himself proposed this measure, to enable the produce of Buenos Ayres to be smuggled out of the country, through the province of Entre Rios.

CHAPTER XIV.

Carne con quiero—Corrientino Squadron—Orders to return—Approach of Winter—Vessels Caught—Dangerous Passage—Wild Tigers—River Pilots—Fast by the Stern—Sudden change, and intense Cold—Arrival at Esquina—The Blood Tree—Partridge shooting—Value of an old Waistcoat—Fair Barter—Ostriches and Deer—Scenery—The Conflagration—News from below—Arrival at Santa Fé—Escape of the Harpy—Boast of Rosas.

A gentleman at Goya, hearing me say that I should like to taste some *carne con quiero*, or beef cooked in the hide, sent to the vessel the following day a young bullock, and an

experienced Gaucho. They landed close to the Alecto and proceeded to prepare this South American delicacy. When ready, a boat was sent to bring it off. It appeared very brown and dirty, and was stuck on long sticks, which caused intense merriment amongst the cooks and stewards; but, for all that, it was very tender and well-flavoured.

We were confined several days to the neighbourhood of the vessel by violent rains. The time was occupied in cutting wood, of which immense boat-loads were brought off every day, to fill our capacious bunkers, as the coal ran very short.

Early the following morning, the Corrientino squadron arrived from below. It consisted of five gun boats and two schooners, taken from the enemy. They brought news of the capture of the Obligado schooner from an English officer under the batteries of San Lorenzo. We were extremely anxious to hear the particulars of the loss, but could only get a broad grin in return.

The Corrientinos brought us orders to drop down the river immediately, as the water

was falling very rapidly. Every exertion was now made to bring off wood, &c., and to get ready for immediate departure.

Wednesday, May 6th.—All things being ready, and steam up, we weighed and ran downwards in great spirits, with our single engine. Numerous otters popped their heads out of the water with a wondering gaze at the vessel as she passed; and a kind of black monkey chattered and grimaced at us from the trees, sometimes within fifteen yards.

The banks had now, in a measure, changed their appearance. The long grass and reeds had begun to wither away, and from all points the drainage of the country was falling rapidly into the river. The trees, nevertheless, were as green as ever, and the only symptom of the close approach of winter, was the seedy and dried-up appearance of the grass.

Several of the tail of the convoy were left at Goya, some of them on shore, which rendered it doubtful whether they would all make their appearance at the appointed rendezvous, the Cerito of Santa Fé, on the nineteenth instant. If the accounts brought by the

Corrientine fleet, about the formidable nature of the batteries of San Lorenzo are true, the vessels that may be detained will be caught in a trap, as they will not of course dare to venture down afterwards.

At 11 A.M. we were obliged to come-to by the stern, to sound a very bad and dangerous passage. The pilot returned from his survey at one o'clock, and told us it was "*mucho malo,*" (very bad,) there being only eleven feet of water at most, and, at one or two points, less. The channel was likewise tortuous, and in one place ran at right angles to the current. It was his opinion, therefore, that it was very doubtful if we got over at all. The Alecto did not like to be caged above this pass; particularly as the water was sinking rapidly. The delay of another day, or even hour, might imprison her here for eight months. So she girded her loins, prepared for a dash, put on full power, and went slap at it. Fortunately she hit the centre of the passage, and hardly touched.

At length we came to the last turn, put her head down stream towards the shallowest

part, less than ten feet. Onward we went full butt and came upon the ridge, (luckily it was nothing more,) striking just under the fore-foot. The vessel for a second, seemed to hesitate, and heeled over several degrees. Then appearing to make up her mind, she righted herself, rose up forward, and ran right over the barrier of sand with a loud grinding noise and a blow which shook her to the centre.

We now proceeded, although the weather was extremely lowering, and the wind (south) dead against us. As our progress was rapid and quiet, we ran round the points without any intimation of our approach. To this was attributed our surprising two tigers which we saw very composedly pacing up and down a small sandy beach. In a moment we were abreast of them within twenty yards. The larger glided into the bushes; but the smaller brazened it out, and continued promenading with the long walk peculiar to the cat genus. Before a gun or rifle could be prepared we were far out of shot.

Thursday, May 7th.—About noon, we

came-to by the stern, to examine another very bad passage. A few days previously, one of the Corrientine pilots told us that this channel was rapidly closing, and that we should probably not find more than five or six feet of water upon it. We generally disbelieved every word uttered by these river navigators, who, with very few exceptions, are the greatest liars and most ignorant people in the world. But as our late informant was considered the most experienced man in the river, we listened intently to his report, which gave us all the greatest uneasiness, and caused us to wait with anxiety the return of the master and pilot who went away in different boats to find some place where we could safely insinuate the poor Alecto's hull. Our relief was great when they returned and told us they could not find less than three fathoms anywhere. So much for the information of "the most experienced man in the river."

We immediately attempted to heave up our anchor; but in consequence of the strong current acting one way on the stern, and the wind blowing half a gale on the other, our

head was forced partly up the current, and brought such a heavy strain on the cable that all efforts failed, and we were obliged to remain the whole night.

Friday, May 8th.—The change of climate this day was most remarkable. Yesterday the thermometer stood above eighty degrees. The wind suddenly sprang up from the south west, and the mercury fell in two hours to fifty-four, as cold to our feelings as January in England. Therefore, from the lightest clothing, we were suddenly obliged to wrap ourselves in woollens and great coats; and, even thus accoutered, found great difficulty in keeping our blood warm.

We had much hard work in getting our anchor up from the same cause as yesterday, and the narrowness of the channel, but at length succeeded.

At eleven o'clock, four vessels were perceived a-head off the sign-post creek, leading to Esquina. At noon we anchored amongst them, and found them to be the Dolphin and the Fanny, English; and St. Martine and Procida, French.

Here the news of the loss of the Obligado was confirmed.

Saturday, May 9th.—We were very busily engaged all this day in cutting wood for fuel. One species of tree held a kind of liquor in its bark exactly like blood: it was very common and much used by us. The moment it was wounded, the blood exuded in large drops.

Monday, May 11th.—Several officers (including myself) went this day on a shooting excursion to Esquina. After about an hour's pull, we arrived at a landing place near the ruins of that town, and immediately commenced shooting. The partridges were, however, so tame and plentiful, that to bag them afforded little or no sport. Getting tired of this tame work, I strolled towards a ruined house, where a serjeant's guard was picketed. Here I entered into conversation with the soldiers and some estancieros of the neighbourhood, whose attention and admiration were excited by my old blue velvet waistcoat, very much the worse for wear. I immediately pulled it off, and asked them what it was worth. After examining it well,

and consulting together, an estanciero offered me a fat cow and six sheep for it. This did not suit me, as I wanted tiger skins, or ostrich feathers; besides, the man cunningly offered much less than the garment was worth, which cost, in Bond Street, London, about three pounds; and, although much worn, was nearly as valuable here as when new. On the other hand, his cow and sheep were not worth five dollars. I therefore declined exchanging, and tried to explain the principles of fair barter; but without effect. I then offered it for half its value in skins or ostrich feathers, but, as time would be necessary to procure them, my proposal was of no avail.

After lunching heartily on *carne con quiero*, we rode into the country, and fell in with a flock of thirteen ostriches and several deer, but did not kill any, as we were unprepared for such large game.

On our return to the landing place, we were very much struck with the beauty of the scenery, and fertility of the soil. The land undulated in a most pleasing manner. From a slight elevation, we enjoyed a

picturesque view of numerous creeks, (which in England would be designated large rivers,) winding along, and finding at length an outlet in the Parana. Their borders were fringed with huge trees, like forest avenues, and the reflection of their heavy foliage cast a gloom on the otherwise translucent waters. The Guaranis, or Indian shore, was just discernible in the distance on the opposite side of the river.

A thought suddenly struck us that a fire would do no harm, and be a grand sight. Nay, in conformity with the doctrine of many agriculturists, we argued ourselves into a belief that it would be a positive benefit to the land. Our idea was instantly realized; for, by the assistance of a lucifer match, the grass was kindled. The flame flew along like wild-fire; in the course of a few minutes, a most glorious blaze ensued, which increased the whole day; and at sunset we perceived huge volumes of smoke loading the air as far as the eye could reach.

Tuesday, 12th.—Still hard at work filling coal bunkers with wood. In the evening, a

gig was perceived in the distance pulling up stream. This set every one agog, as we knew she would bring some news. On her arrival, we found to our great delight, that she had conveyed the February mail from England, having left the Lizard about fifty miles below, for want of a pilot. We heard that the poor Lizard had suffered severely in passing San Lorenzo. Two officers and two men were killed, besides several wounded. This was owing to the capture of the Obligado schooner, which was sent down with orders to detain any other vessels, and prevent them passing up.

Our time was fully occupied in wooding until Friday morning, when, having completed a sufficient stock, we started down the river, leaving two vessels there to whip up the convoy.

On Saturday afternoon, at one o'clock, we anchored at Santa Fé, with the remainder of the Paraña squadron, and, to our great astonishment, perceived that the little Harpy had also made her way up past the batteries. She had hugged the cliffs so closely, that

very few guns could touch her, only those placed on projecting points, in a raking position. She had suffered no loss; only one person, her commander, being wounded. We were very much pleased by her bringing up the mails a month later than those received the previous day. Much diversion was caused by hearing that Rosas had said, "No more savage English steamers shall go up the river: my batteries will sink them." The credulous inhabitants implicitly believed this boast; and when the Harpy passed the town of Rosario, she was accompanied by carriages-and-four, and a numerous cavalcade, to see her sunk at San Lorenzo. Their disappointment must have been great to behold the little vessel dodge them so cleverly.

CHAPTER XV.

Important communication—A Project—Conjectures as to its Originator — Precautions against Surprise—Theatre afloat—Affecting scene—Impolicy of harsh conduct by Officers towards Men—Floating Islands—Brig ashore—The last Rendezvous.

SUNDAY, May 17th.—I was much delighted this evening, by a communication from Sir Charles Hotham to the effect that, should the ground be favourable, he intended to plant a masked battery of Congreve rockets on an island opposite the principal position of the enemy on the heights of San Lorenzo. But as the idea had been formed from cursory

observation in passing up the river, and as memory often plays tricks upon us, it was thought advisable to postpone a positive decision till the ground could be thoroughly reconnoitred. Meantime, I was ordered to put myself in secret communication with Lieutenant Barnard. The meditated plan was as follows:—

Opposite the heavy part of the batteries of San Lorenzo is an island, covered with long reeds, grass, and small trees, but completely commanded by the guns on the heights. It was proposed that on the night before the convoy should fight their way down, a certain number of Congreve rockets should be landed at the back of the island, and placed all ready in the cover for being erected, which, when such missiles are properly prepared, can be effected in a very few minutes. By the side of each rocket, a hole was to be dug large enough to contain the men working them, and the earth thrown up as a kind of barricade. At a signal given by the commander-in-chief, when all the enemy's batteries should be fully manned waiting for

the convoy, a tremendous fire was to be commenced, which, as it would be totally unexpected by our opponents, would be proportionably effective and destructive. This fire would in all probability be returned, though the enemy's efforts would be frustrated by the prepared holes. Even should the rocket stands or tubes (very difficult objects) be hit, fishes and instruments would be at hand to repair them immediately. Besides, when the vessels were passing, the chances would be, that from the height of the cliffs, the rockets would strike the enemy over the mast-heads, thus causing a double-banked fire of great force.

Surmises have been made as to the originator of this plan, which was brought to a successful issue. Many thought it arose from the practical mind of Sir Charles Hotham; others gave the credit of it to Captain Hope, of the Firebrand, whose extraordinary coolness under fire, was the theme of general conversation. But no doubt Sir Charles Hotham and the Admiralty are well informed on the subject, and it con-

cerns no one else. The French Admiral and Captain Hope had been consulted, and had approved in high terms of the project.

From this time, until Sunday the 25th of May, all the preparations connected with the intended masked battery were going on as rapidly and secretly as possible; and as a private intimation had been conveyed to me that I was to command it, I turned over in my mind how best to meet any possible contingency that might happen, particularly in case of a surprise: for example, how to conceal the boat, to keep the men together, and, in short, to avert every kind of disaster. In order to acquire a just idea of the distance a boat might be seen in the dark, I went, as soon as the sun set, to our mast-head, and watched intently all the boats moving about from vessel to vessel; noting accurately the distance I could clearly follow them, and what difference was caused by moonlight or starlight. I likewise attended carefully to the sound of voices, the splashing of oars, and other noises likely to betray us to the enemy prematurely. In the day-

time likewise I stationed myself aloft, at a similar altitude to that of the barrancas, and watched with a spy-glass our men who were washing their clothes on an island about the same distance from me as I imagined the masked battery would be from the cliffs. By these means I ascertained the best method of concealing my party from the enemy.

During this period, the Firebrand's engineers were repairing our crippled engine, which they did in so admirable a manner that it worked much better and more effectively than ever.

In the meantime, the men of the Firebrand had been preparing a theatrical representation; and as they thought that some of the scenery or dresses might be damaged in the forthcoming action, they petitioned to perform the drama at once. The evening of Saturday 24th was therefore fixed on for the play. The "Theatre" was rigged up on the starboard side of the forecastle, and very nicely decorated, forming a respectable stage, the port side being partitioned off

as a dressing-room for the actors. Considering the means, the play ("Pizarro,") was creditably got up and performed.

After one of the most affecting scenes, the heroines, Elvira and Cora, (personated by two clean-shaved stokers, capitally dressed, except a total want of bustles,) came off the stage into the green-room. Elvira immediately lit a pipe; this rather excited risibility; but when Cora leant back against one of the large forecastle guns and hitched up her concealed unmentionables, such a roar of laughter ensued that the whole audience were disturbed from their tearful sympathies.

The drama passed off with much éclat, and the men and performers were highly delighted at the presence and attention of the captains of the squadron. It was indeed a subject of great congratulation to any one having the welfare of the naval service at heart, to see such kind feelings subsisting between officers and men, affording a proof that mild conduct from superiors to inferiors, is compatible with a

high state of discipline and efficiency. It has been my lot to see many good and well-behaved men, soured, disquieted, and ruined, merely by an habitual harshness of manner which some officers acquire, and of which they are totally unconscious. This is a great misfortune, and cannot be too much guarded against. In the course of my experience, I have seen instances where, when this slight defect has been hinted to an officer, he has immediately corrected himself, and afterwards acknowledged that he could not believe, until he tried, the difference a milder demeanour made in the amount of work done, which, after all, affords the best criterion of a good officer.

Sunday, May 25th.—Early this morning all the convoy and men of war, except the English steamers, started down the river to the last rendezvous, five miles above the batteries of San Lorenzo. One French merchant brig was, however, detained by a curious circumstance happening in the night. A large floating island or camalote came athwart her hawse, and drove her

down some distance before she could succeed in disengaging herself. About ten A.M. another camalote of very large size, apparently two acres in extent, floated into the midst of us. Two of the vessels were obliged to shift their helms hard over and veer cable quickly, otherwise they would no doubt have been sent adrift. These islands are sometimes very compact, and capable of sustaining a considerable weight. There is a well-authenticated story of two tigers being drifted down upon a camalote as far as Monte Video, where the beasts created great alarm.

At one o'clock we weighed altogether, and ran rapidly down the river. We had hardly advanced twenty miles, before we perceived the unfortunate brig which had been entangled by the camalote the previous night, hard and fast on a bank. On boarding her, we discovered that she was abandoned by all, save a large French poodle, a monkey grinning at us from the main top, and several parrots chattering in the rigging. We immediately anchored, detaining the

Lizard. As it was too late to commence work that night, every preparation was made to begin in earnest the following morning. The soundings all round the brig were therefore now carefully taken.

About nine o'clock P.M. the owner, a Frenchman, came on board in his boat, complaining bitterly of his native pilot, who, said he, "the moment the vessel struck, took to the boats and ran away."

The following morning, we commenced unloading the deck cargo of hides, and laying out anchors to heave the brig off. We then sent a large hawser from our stern; and when all was ready, hove taught on cables, and steamed a-head with full power, without however moving her a foot. We then eased and stopped our engines, and let her drop down, slacking up the stern hawser. Full power was again applied with a view to jerk her off. Three attempts failed; and the Lizard and Harpy were just going to be added to the team, when one more trial was made. Steam, mighty steam, triumphed at last, and tugged the unlucky vessel into

deep water. The whole of the following morning was taken up in heaving in our cables and hawsers and putting to rights the geer used in saving the brig.

In the afternoon, every article required for the masked battery was deposited on board the Alecto. Next morning, we weighed at day-light; and, at half-past ten o'clock, anchored at the last rendezvous, about four miles above the batteries of San Lorenzo. We were desired by an officer of the Gorgon not to go inshore of them, as the previous night the enemy had peppered that vessel with red-hot shot, and had obliged her to shift out of range. Before sunset we had the great pleasure of seeing all the convoy anchor amongst us, whipped up by the two little steamers, Lizard and Harpy.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Rocket Party—Sir Charles Hotham—The Reconnoitring Party—A false Alarm—Exploring the Island—Numerous Precautions—The Masked Battery Party proceed on their Enterprise—Landing of the Party—Conveyance and concealment of the Rocket-geer—Heavy Labour—Dawn—The Boat hidden—Rough Repast and Merriment—Slumber.

FRIDAY, May 30th.—This day it was given out that I was to command the rocket party. Lieutenant Barnard was selected for second in command, on account of his proficiency in all branches of knowledge that an officer of artillery requires; and Mr. Hamm, gunner

of the Alecto, for the same reasons, and his intelligence and activity. Immediately upon our arrival with Sir Charles Hotham on board, he repaired to his own ship the Gorgon, which had been lying at the anchorage watching the enemy's motions. He then communicated to Mr. Baker, master of the Gorgon, (since promoted to Lieutenant, R.N.) his intention relative to the masked battery. Fortunately, this officer, in the course of his surveys under the batteries, had discovered a sand-bank on the island right under the enemy's nose, behind which he had frequently concealed himself. This, as described by Mr. Baker, was exactly the place required; but, Sir Charles Hotham, (like an able commander) not choosing to risk the lives of the party without consulting his own judgment, determined to reconnoitre personally.

Accordingly, soon after night closed in, the reconnoitring party, consisting of Sir Charles Hotham, Captain Hope, myself, and Mr. Baker, assembled on board the Gorgon, and were just about to proceed in two boats,

well armed of course, when several small signal rockets were observed to ascend from the very island, or close to it, and were immediately answered from the barrancas opposite.

This stopped the proposed expedition for the night, and Sir Charles determined to take a larger and more powerful boat than was now ready, which would have the advantage of more men in case of surprise, together with a swift one for dispatch. During the whole time the squadron were lying at the anchorage above the batteries, signal men were stationed at the men-of-wars' mast heads, and these repeatedly reported that large boats or canoes were constantly passing and repassing from the enemy to the island.

In his repeated and stealthy visits to the island, Mr. Baker had remarked numerous and large tracks of tigers.

On the evening of the next day, orders were issued for the reconnoitring party to assemble on board the Gorgon. At forty minutes past eight P.M., Sir Charles Hotham, Captain Hope, myself, and Mr. Baker,

prepared to start in the Firebrand's pinnace, closely followed by a very speedy gig of Sir Charles Hotham's. Of course all hands were well armed. Away went the pinnace and gig, propelled by as fine crews as ever left a British man-of-war's side; and, piloted by Mr. Baker, who was thoroughly acquainted with the navigation, pulled, with muffled oars, into the small creek marked in the plan, just below the anchorage. At length we drew out between the two islands, and for about four hundred yards were completely exposed to the batteries.

The greatest caution was here necessary to prevent being seen; and gradually the north point of Rocket Island sheltered the party from the enemy's sight. Mr. Baker now directed the boat towards a very small sandy beach, and, shortly afterwards, her nose grated gently against the shore. At this moment, he exclaimed, "Hallo! look there! there's a tiger!" And, sure enough, within five yards of the boat's bow, sat an animal on his haunches, glaring at the party. We nevertheless immediately

landed according to seniority. As the first officers leaped on shore, sword in hand, the animal gave a loud snort, or grunt, and jumped into the stream, proving to be, instead of a tiger, only an inoffensive and harmless carpincho, or water hog, peculiar to the large rivers of South America.

Taking an escort of ten men, and leaving the remainder to guard the boats, we proceeded, led by Mr. Baker, directly across the island towards the enemy, whose lights could be plainly seen nearly the whole time the party were crossing. On arriving at the opposite side, the place was found to surpass the most sanguine expectations as to its suitability for the masked battery; and indeed, as was expressed by one of the officers, it seemed formed by nature for the very purpose. In this part, it rose on each side with a gentle elevation to the centre, which might have been twenty feet above the level of the river; and, in the very spot required, the land dipped suddenly for about seventy yards, and then rose again in a bank of loose, soft sand, about ten feet high, close

by which the river rapidly ran. It was at once perceived that here the rockets might be placed in comparative safety; the only difficulty being to get the men into this large natural trench, to insure a safe retreat after the ammunition should be expended, and to prevent, during the stay of the party on the island, any suspicion on the enemy's side of such a hornet's nest being in so dangerous a proximity. The party then cautiously retraced their steps, and had a long, tedious pull back, getting on board the Gorgon at half-past two A.M.

To carry into effect the projected surprise was immediately resolved. The officers were warned, and every preparation made. Very little, however, remained to be done, except the cooking of provisions, as Lieutenant (now Commander) Barker, of the Firebrand, had prepared her paddle-box boat with the greatest skill, for the transit of the rocket party and their murderous projectiles.

Amongst the numerous precautions taken to avoid surprise or defeat, it may be instruc-

tive to describe one proposed by Sir Charles Hotham. It was forseen that, as the island was about nine hundred yards broad from the place where we intended to land, to the trench or gully where the battery was to be placed, it would be necessary to leave the boat with a very slender guard. It was, therefore, arranged that a strong chain should be shackled to a hole in the keel under the bottom; which chain, when the party were engaged in the battery, should be taken along a trench, dug for the purpose, as far as the root of the nearest tree: the trench was then to be filled up. The oars were to be concealed in different places, each man stowing away his own, in the long grass, as near as cover could be found. Thus, if a strong party of the enemy had surprised the three men left in charge of the boat, and overpowered them, the assailants would have been most confoundedly puzzled to steal the oars, or push the boat adrift.

Every preparation being thus satisfactorily made, the only occupation the squadron had was to exercise their patience as well as they

could, and whistle for a fair wind, without which it would have been the height of imprudence to risk the passage. On Monday, the 2nd of June, towards noon, the wind began to come round gradually from the S. W. and it was evident to all that a fair breeze was not far off. About sun-set, it arrived, and at eight P.M. blew with such a gentle steadiness as almost to insure its continuance. Orders were issued; and at half-past eight the officers and men for the masked battery, arrived simultaneously alongside the Alecto, bringing the boat intended to be used.* An hour and a half was consumed in loading her, as it was of the greatest importance to stow every thing in such a manner that it could be found in the dark at a moment's notice.

At ten o'clock, bidding adieu to our shipmates, and piloted by Mr. Baker in a gig, the masked battery party shoved off from the Alecto. It was my desire not to pass

* The Firebrand's paddle-box boat was employed on this occasion.

the open space between the islands until midnight, when the moon should have set or nearly so, as the paddle-box boat was a large object and very likely to be seen by a vigilant enemy.

A slight oversight in the stowage of the boat, created some annoyance till a landing was effected. In consequence of the necessity of placing the rockets in a dry part of the boat, they were put on the platform abaft, and the weight was so great as to render abortive all attempts to get her on an even keel. Great difficulty in steering was thus caused, which the steer-oar could not by any means control; she was allowed, therefore, to drift by the exposed place broadside on to the current. A few minutes more sufficed to gain the already-mentioned sandy beach, when we immediately landed.

Sentries were thrown out all round, and the party commenced handing out the stands and legs of rocket geer, by far the heaviest part of the apparatus, leaving one twelve pound stand mounted in the boat, and ready

for instant use. Mr. Hamm, with three men, was intrusted with this charge, receiving strict orders not to fire until the last extremity, as such an event would blow the whole business.

The men, (twenty in number,) being thus laden and drawn up in line, myself and Mr. Baker in advance, and Lieutenant Barnard in the rear, to prevent any straggling, commenced the first trip over the island. This, however, was not found easy work. In addition to the heavy apparatus, the men were very much encumbered by the weight of their arms, which it was positively necessary to carry, as an ambush of the enemy was a very likely occurrence. This combined weight was as much as they could stagger under. Their fatigue was moreover aggravated by the nature of the ground, it being sometimes boggy and soft; and, where it was firm and dry, long tufts of reed-like grass grew, from three to eight and ten feet in height. In addition to this, the men were exposed to a kind of prickly cactus that scratched and tore their legs.

Several halts for rest were necessary; but the most effective one, and that which put renewed vigour into all, was on the crest of the island, about the centre, when the lights from the enemy's battery were distinctly visible. This sight at once revealed to the men the nature of our expedition. Their conduct was admirable, and conduced very materially to the success of the enterprise.

Having halted twice or thrice more, the line of burthened men crept stealthily over the brow into the gully or trench, and all the geer was properly deposited in the most convenient situations. After a short rest, during which the voices of the enemy could be plainly distinguished, calling to one another, the party slowly returned. Mr. Baker now took his departure in the gig, leaving his hearty good wishes to the party who were left entirely to their own resources.

The next load to be carried was the sticks or poles, and a very heavy burden they were. The moon had now entirely disappeared, and the lights in the enemy's battery were gradually extinguished. No

guide through the pitchy darkness being left, the men had to touch one another to prevent separation. Our progress amongst the patches of long, wiry grass, was a slow and tiresome operation; and at every resting-place it was necessary to call over the rocket-quarters to ascertain if any of the party had strayed out of the line. One man, No. 5 of No. 2, twenty-four pounder, was actually lost for the whole night, and did not succeed in returning to the paddle-box boat until day-light. As she had been concealed in the interim, he would never have found her had he not been luckily picked up by the out-post sentry.

Upon our arriving again at the battery, it was so intensely dark, that all the sticks were put close together in some bushes, as we were not able to hit upon the exact place where the stands had been deposited. The men by this time were much exhausted by severe labour, as a considerable circuit had been made, and they had come several hundred yards ancle-deep in half-frozen mud.

One precious hour was consumed in con-

veying this cargo. As soon as the men could proceed, they returned slowly to the boat, where it was found absolutely necessary to refresh them with a glass of grog and a snack of pork and biscuit. This had a marvellous effect, and very shortly another trip was commenced with the rockets. We had now a lighter and easier job, as the stars, which shone brightly, enabled the party to keep close together, and proceed straightly, and much more rapidly, as they were only allowed—officers of course lending a willing hand—to carry two twenty-four pounders.

A couple more trips took all the rockets; and when about to retire for the last time, the men were much amused at hearing the enemy's drums beat the reveillé for dawn. It was not by any means broad day-light when they got back to the boat, but there was still much to do. Mr. Hamm was now sent across with two of his guard to keep a look out, and report any suspicious motions amongst the enemy, whilst I made immediate preparation to conceal the boat.

Fortunately, a few yards beyond the little sandy bay where the paddle-box boat had been lying all night, a large willow tree had fallen into the river; at the exact length of the boat beyond that, was a point of land running out likewise; between these two arms (as it were), the boat was immediately swung, into which space it fitted, as if made for that very purpose. All the neighbouring willow trees were robbed of part of their luxuriant foliage, which was immediately stuck in all round the boat, forming a leafy screen; this so effectually and naturally concealed her, that it was totally impossible for any person to suspect she was there, much less to fish her out, either from the river or land side.

The excitement and fatigue of the night had not, however, blunted the appetites nor depressed the spirits of the party; and it was most gratifying to hear the incessant crunching of jaws, mingled with bursts of merriment, beneath the tarpaulin hauled over the boat, as several four-pound pieces of pork rapidly disappeared. Our men, indeed,

knew not how to control their delight in anticipating the astonishment and confusion into which the present *ruse* would throw the "Dons," as they called the enemy.

A good meal and a cheerful heart are no bad sedatives; and accordingly all hands were soon wrapped in deep slumber, undisturbed for some hours, as the wind hung to the westward of north, which being rather scant to pass the batteries, would most likely prevent the attempt that night.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

GROVE AND SON, PRINTERS, TRINITY STREET, SOUTHWARK.

00032879

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 10 February, 2016